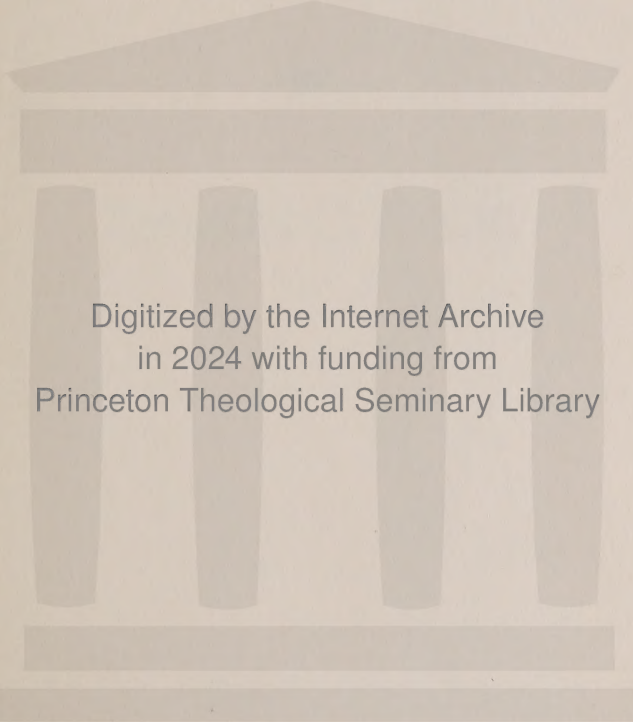


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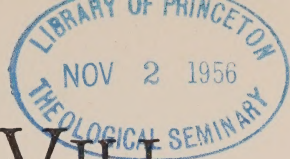




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# THE FREE WILL BAPTIST STORY

BY

DAMON C. DODD

*Published By*

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT OF THE  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FREE WILL BAPTISTS

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

1956

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**FIRST PRINTING  
MARCH, 1956**

**PRINTED IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

*This book is dedicated*

*to*

MARILYN AND BARBARA,

*my daughters, whom I hope  
will be used of the Lord to help  
perpetuate the cause of Christ  
through the Free Will Baptist Church  
which their father and mother  
so well loved.*





# CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction .....	5
Preface .....	7
Chapter I	
In Spiritual Darkness, A Light Shines .....	9
Chapter II	
Arminius vs. Calvin .....	13
Chapter III	
The Rise of the Baptists .....	17
Chapter IV	
Arminian Baptists in England .....	21
Chapter V	
Religion in the Colonies .....	27
Chapter VI	
Beginnings in Carolina .....	32
Chapter VII	
A Voice in the Wilderness .....	37
Chapter VIII	
Heroes of the Faith .....	42
Chapter IX	
When Hell Almost Prevailed .....	48
Chapter X	
Divided, United, Prospering .....	55
Chapter XI	
Beginnings in the Northeast .....	61
Chapter XII	
God's Man for God's Hour .....	66
Chapter XIII	
Growing through the Years .....	73

## CONTENTS (Continued)

	<i>Page</i>
Chapter XIV	
Pattern for the Future .....	79
Chapter XV	
Putting the Roots Down .....	85
Chapter XVI	
Birth of the Conference .....	90
Chapter XVII	
Venture with a Vision .....	96
Chapter XVIII	
The Light That Failed .....	103
Chapter XIX	
Recovery and Reunion .....	109
Chapter XX	
A Denomination Reborn .....	116
Chapter XXI	
The Denomination and Foreign Missions .....	126
Chapter XXII	
Free Will Baptists and Home Missions .....	134
Chapter XXIII	
Free Will Baptists and Education .....	140
Chapter XXIV	
Free Will Baptist Bible College .....	150
Chapter XXV	
Free Will Baptist Auxiliaries .....	158
Chapter XXVI	
The National Association in Review .....	164
Chapter XXVII	
Summary and Conclusion .....	180
Bibliography .....	184



## INTRODUCTION

"Where may I find an adequate history of the Free Will Baptist denomination?" How often this question has been asked none of us knows. But we do know how often we have had to admit that such a literary work has been lacking through the years.

Now, however, the Free Will Baptist story, with all of its thrills and inspirations, is available to our people in this volume, the task of several years and Damon C. Dodd's most recent literary work of love.

No one is more qualified to write this story than Mr. Dodd. For more than twenty years he has been a Free Will Baptist, having ministered to our churches in several states, having filled some of the highest posts his denomination could offer, and having loved his church with a burning ardor. While he could never honestly be called a bigot or a biased sectarian, Mr. Dodd has recognized his church, its principles, its doctrines, and most of all its Christ, over and above all others. The author has put years of research, travel, prayer, sweat, and tears into this work which will not go unsung because this book will make one of the noblest contributions to the denomination and to the world our people have ever enjoyed.

To me each chapter is unquestionably a classic—deserving universal reading, meriting highest commendation for its interpretative history of our church. Wonderful would be the enrichment in knowledge of our church's history in the lives of all our people if they would read and study these gripping chapters.

Spiritual illumination and soundness in the faith once delivered will be the result of the recorded experiences of some of our denomination's greats. This is the book we have prayed for and hoped to get in our day. No Free Will Baptist family can afford to be without it.

So long as this book is printed, there is no excuse for any of our people being ignorant of the glorious heritage which has been given to us by our fathers. This book deserves to be the favorite rendezvous of all our people who care whence we came.

C. F. BOWEN

Free Will Baptist Bible College  
Nashville, Tennessee



## PREFACE

Since becoming a member of the Free Will Baptist church in 1932, I have been intensely interested in the story of how there ever came to be a Free Will Baptist church. This desire was based on a two-fold purpose; First, I wanted to satisfy my own curiosity; and second, I wanted to be able to answer the questions of others who were constantly asking about the movement. So I began to cast about for some source material with which to acquaint myself with my new-found love—and I found none. This only served to whet my appetite the keener, and I sought every means whereby I might learn something of historical value.

Little by little, the story began to appear. I eagerly grasped any bit of information which I found and filed it away for future reference. I sat at the feet of some of the men and women who had a part in making the history and heard their stories first hand. I dug into dusty bookshelves to find clues, I traveled into some of the historical places and investigated, I searched through stacks of literature in libraries and bookstores for any story or record that was there. And after 22 years of study and search I am forced to admit that only a fragmentary story is the result.

Much of the history of Free Will Baptists is buried in obscurity and will remain thus forever. No records at all were kept of many of the important events of our denomination. Still other records were so inadequate as to provide little, if any knowledge of our past. We can but hope that we do not make the same mistake and thus deprive those who come after us of a record of our doings.

The later chapters of *The Free Will Baptist Story* have been written from the standpoint of an eye-witness, inasmuch as it has been my privilege to have a part, small though it may have been, in the National Association since 1940. Then, too, the minutes of all those meetings are a part of the bibliography of this work, and they are filled with the business of the denomination. The institutions and agencies of the denomination are presented from first hand evidence, either in the form of minutes or by the word of the men and women who were, then, and are now, a part of such institutions and agencies.

Let me point out once more that this work is designed primarily to present a connected and continuous story of the Free Will Baptist church. I have majored on the picturesque rather than the historical. Many personalities and events are brought into focus in this story



in a manner that would have been out of place in a work of pure history. However, I have sought only true historical fact as is here presented and I can verify each one of them with the material which I have had at hand. No claim is made as to originality or prior-discovery. I have tried to weave into an interesting and informative story all the facts which I had at my disposal. This material was originally written for *Contact*, the publication of the National Association of Free Will Baptists. Rev. W. S. Mooneyham, the editor, asked me to prepare a few stories in this connection to appear in that paper as a series. However, the few stories stretched into many until more than one and one half years were spent in running them. By that time the demand for the entire series to appear in book form seemed to be great enough to warrant this undertaking. The first twenty chapters as they appear herewith represent the monthly stories in *Contact*. The last seven chapters bring the story completely up to date as of July, 1955.

Everyone from whom I have sought counsel and advice has been most generous and kind, and I hereby acknowledge my debt of gratitude to those whom I can readily recall. Rev. E. C. Morris has been of great assistance in making his historical collection available to me. Rev. J. L. Welch has shared his material as well as his experience, as has Rev. J. F. Miller, my first pastor, whom I hold in high esteem. Dr. L. C. Johnson, Mrs. Mary Welch, and many others have rendered service and help in this connection for which I am eternally grateful.

I must mention the encouragement given to me by Rev. W. S. Mooneyham to complete this story. I deeply appreciate his helpful suggestions and his patience in this task. And finally, to my wife, Sylvia, who, as my secretary has painstakingly gone over this manuscript and typed the greater part of it, I must give my most heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

It is my earnest and sincere prayer that this record will present our beloved Free Will Baptist denomination to the reader in such a manner as to engender a greater respect and deeper love for the glorious ministry which she has carried on for the past two and one-quarter centuries. If such can be the end result of the labor represented in the following chapters, I shall consider that the investment of the many hours has indeed not been in vain.

Nashville, Tennessee

DAMON C. DODD

## CHAPTER I

### IN SPIRITUAL DARKNESS, A LIGHT SHINES

Making its advent as it did during the early days of our national life, the Free Will Baptist denomination played a leading part in the formation of religious policy in the infant country. Even before there was a United States of America, there was a Free Will Baptist movement. The influence of this movement was very definitely felt in every phase of national life.

In presenting the Free Will Baptist story, it will be necessary to go back into the pages of the church's history in Europe to get the background material. To the reader who is impatient to get along with the actual story, this may be a bit trying but it is the request of the writer that you indulge him this privilege.

No claim is laid to prior-discovery or originality in the presentation of this material. I have used all the source-material available and have consulted with people who have been involved personally in the making of much of this history.

I shall endeavor in this writing to steer away from the mechanical historicisms which could well become boring. Instead, I hope to make it a thrilling, stirring, down-to-earth account of the Free Will Baptist movement.

Perhaps in the truest sense of the word this writing could not be considered historical, for there will be much by way of allusion and comparison to events and parallels which will make for momentary deviations. Then, too there will be references to personalities which, in some instances occupy an entire chapter. Suffice it to say that more emphasis will be given to the presentation of our story and growth spiritually and numerically, rather than the setting forth of documented records and statistics.

There may also be areas of disagreement in your facts and mine. Seldom do writers or statisticians agree to the letter in matters involving as much lapse of time and research as are involved in this story. Then, too, it must be remembered that records are inadequate and sources few, so that there must of necessity be a certain amount of "reading between the lines."

The story here presented is given with a prayer that our Lord may be glorified and our denomination more appreciated.

The background of Free Will Baptist history is set in Europe

during the latter part of the 16th and the early part of the 17th centuries.

The prevailing theology of the day was that of a fatalistic predestination known as Calvinism. Augustine, one of the early church fathers, taught that the salvation of the elect depended on the "bare will of God, and that his decree to save those whom he chose to save was unconditional."

In the ninth century, Gottschalk supplied the second part of the doctrine; that those who are not saved unconditionally are "fore-ordained to be damned, or reprobated to be lost."

In 1535 John Calvin united the "foreordination unto life eternal unconditionally" of Augustine and the "foreordination of the reprobate to hell unconditionally" of Gottschalk and sent them out as the center of his system of Systematic Theology in the Christian Institutes. This doctrine received the name "Calvinism."

In substance, Calvinism held that God was under no obligation to save the human race as such, but that He chose certain ones to become the recipients of saving grace. These were called the "elect" and were to be saved regardless of their personal desires or ideas.

The Calvinistic doctrine as it was set forth in the early part of the 17th century could be summarized under these cardinal points:

1. The Atonement of Christ was limited only to the "Elect of God."
2. The election of the "elect" was unconditional, since they had been chosen of God to be saved.
3. The Gospel call was not coextensive, but reached only the "elect."
4. The grace of God and the call of the Holy Spirit were irresistible, for they came only to those who were "elected to salvation."
5. That a person thus saved would persevere to the end of life, with no possibility of falling away.

Calvinism had become supreme in most of the Protestant countries in Europe by the beginning of the 17th century, but the very rigor of its uniformity and the inconsistency of its demands provoked a reaction.

It was a practice in those days to persecute severely those who did not agree with the prevailing religious ideas. These "heretics," as they were called, were considered most dangerous and malicious persons and were to be dealt with accordingly.

These unfortunates had a champion in the person of Richard Coornhert, who held that religious convictions should be a personal matter and that the individual should not be forced or coerced into accepting any teaching against his will. In his defense of these unfortunates he assailed the prevailing Calvinism, especially the "fatal-



istic predestination" angle and opposed anything other than the exercise of "the free will" in matters of religion.

Richard Coornhert (sometimes spelled Koornhert) was Secretary of State of Holland and was a man of learning. He had a most thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. In 1589, he published at Amsterdam several works in which he attacked the doctrine of predestination. So skillfully did he prepare and present these arguments that the theologians of Holland could not refute them.

Coornhert's objection to Calvinism was that "the doctrine of absolute decrees represented God as the author of sin, as such decrees made sin necessary and inevitable no less than damnation." This view was published in book form. Immediately the book was condemned as being contrary to the teachings of the church because it advocated "free thought and liberal interpretation of God's plans." The officials of the church at Delft decreed that the book must be answered or refuted.

Coornhert was immediately set upon by two outstanding ministers of Holland, who took up the argument in favor of Calvinism against his more liberal views. However, when they saw that they were losing the fight in the eyes of public opinion, they adopted an infralapsarian view of the Scriptures and thus incurred the wrath of the High Calvinists.

In order to combat the Coornhert doctrine of "free will" and the heresy to which the two Calvinistic ministers had given place, the High Calvinists called for their champion to refute these teachings and to publicly reprimand these heretics. This champion was Jacobus Arminius.

Let us deviate for a time and study something of the life of Arminius.

Jacobus Arminius was born at Oudewater, South Holland, October 10, 1560. His father, Herman Jakobs, a cutler, died while his son was an infant, leaving a widow and two other children. A converted Catholic priest, Theodore Aemilius, adopted Jacobus and sent him to school at Utrecht. Aemilius died when Jacobus Arminius was 15 years of age and it seemed that this would be the end of the education of the young man. However, a native of Oudewater visited in the home of Jacobus' mother and seeing the promising young man, undertook his maintenance and education.

They moved to Marburg and had just got settled when news of the Spanish attack on Oudewater reached them. Arminius hurried

home, only to find that all his relatives had been slain by the Spaniards.

Arminius was sent to school at the newly established University of Leyden to study theology. During his six years there (1576-82) many things of importance were taking place. A war for independence in Holland had started men to thinking on the matter of personal liberty in religion. Some held that the state should tolerate only one religion while others thought that all religions should be tolerated. Among the latter group was Richard Coornhert, who argued in private and public that it was wrong to punish heretics and that men should be allowed to exercise their free will in religious matters.

The pastor of the University Church of Leyden, Casper Koolhaes, pleaded against a rigid uniformity and begged for unity and tolerance in religious matters.

The professors at the university had a great influence on the life and thinking of Arminius, as we shall see later. Such men as William Feuguersis who taught "men could be led, not driven" in religious matters, and John Killmann, who said that high Calvinism "made God a tyrant and an executioner" had much to do with shaping Arminius' broadmindedness toward religious freedom.

From Leyden, Arminius went to Geneva and studied under Theodore Beza. He was three years in Geneva and then went to Rome, where he learned much that stood him in good stead later. In 1588 he was called to Amsterdam and ordained and in 1603 he was appointed professor of theology at the University of Leyden.

It was about this time that he was called on to defend the Calvinistic teachings against the ideas of Coornhert and some others of the radicals. In this study he was led to confront the question of necessity and free will. The further he pursued this study, the more his old views gave way to the new ones. At last, a study of the Book of Romans, especially chapter seven, convinced him of the matter of personal faith and he became fully persuaded to assert the "freedom of the will" in all religious matters.

So far as we are able to determine, this marks the first genuine effort on the part of any theologian to defend the "free will" idea, so for Free Will Baptists this was an important event!

## CHAPTER II

### ARMINIUS VS. CALVIN

The position taken by Jacobus Arminius touched off a terrific reaction. The uproar was the loudest in ecclesiastical courts where the divines of the day objected vociferously to the new doctrine. Arminius was successful in defending his position against all comers.

However, when his friend and colleague, Franz Gomarus, turned against him and berated him and his new doctrine, it seemed that something went out of Arminius. Thus, worn out by uncongenial controversy and ecclesiastical persecution, Jacobus Arminius died without having developed any logical and consistent system. This was left for his successor, Simon Episcopius, to do a few years later.

To Jacobus Arminius must go the credit for having actually broken the strangle hold which high Calvinism had on the spiritual throats of the people. In one of his stronger statements Arminius set forth the views from which the Arminian doctrine was later formulated. He said that Calvinism made God "the author of sin, that it restricted his grace, that it left multitudes outside without hope, that it condemned multitudes for believing the truth; viz., that for them no salvation was either intended or provided in Christ, and it gave an absolutely false security to those who believed themselves to be the elect of God."

Peter Bertius, who preached the funeral of Arminius said of him, "There lived a man whom it was not possible for those who knew him sufficiently to esteem; those who entertained no esteem for him are such as never knew him well enough to appreciate his merits."

At the death of Arminius, his mantle fell on the shoulders of a young theologian who had studied under him at the University of Leyden, Simon Episcopius. He was pastor of a church near Rotterdam in 1610, the year that the Arminians came out against the Calvinists in what is known as "The Remonstrance." The next year he supported the Arminians at the Hague Conference. It was during this time that he systematized the Arminian theology and set it forth in detailed form. It must be remembered that Episcopius simply took the material which Arminius had already written and categorized it so that people would actually know what Arminianism was.

Like the Calvinistic doctrine, the Arminian doctrine can be set out under five main points.

1. The atonement of Christ was unlimited, having been designed for all men everywhere.
2. Election was conditional, depending upon the individual's acceptance of the terms of salvation.
3. The Gospel call was coextensive, and the message of salvation was to be preached to all.
4. The Grace of God and the call of the Holy Spirit were resistible, inasmuch as man had the exercise of his "free will" to accept or reject as he chose.
5. That it was possible for a person who had accepted Christ as his Savior, by faith in the atonement, to renounce the faith, disown Christ, and be forever lost.

In order to get a better idea of the vast area of difference between the doctrines, let us set them side by side and compare the main points:

<i>Doctrine</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Arminianism</i>
1. Atonement of Christ	Limited to the "elect."	Unlimited. Christ died for all.
2. Gospel Call	Limited only to the "elect."	Coextensive and universal.
3. Election	Unconditional, inasmuch as a certain few had been chosen of God to be saved.	Conditional. The terms of the plan of salvation being the conditions.
4. Grace of God in the call of the Holy Spirit	Irresistible. Those who were the elect of God had no choice but to yield to the call of Grace.	Resistable. That men surrendered or rejected as of their personal choice.
5. Freedom of the Will	None whatsoever. God had irrevocably sealed the will and mind of the "elect."	Man had the exercise of his "free will" inasmuch as God had made him a free moral agent.
6. Perseverance	The "elect" would persevere unto the end, according to the predestined plan of God for their lives.	The saved man had every reason to persevere but his perseverance was a matter of faith. Loss of faith meant loss of experience.

Just before the death of Arminius a conference was proposed which would bring together the Calvinists, represented by Francis Gomar, and the Arminians, represented by Jacobus Arminius. However, Arminius died before the conference was held. The contentions of the Arminians that had raised such terrific furor were those denying the irresistible predestination and that Christ died not only for the elect, but for all men.

In 1614 the Arminians were instrumental in getting an edict passed by the state of Holland which gave toleration to both the Calvinistic and Arminian opinions and declared further controversy outlawed.



This act served only to arouse the jealousy of the Calvinists and to fan the flame into a conflagration.

By this time the dispute burst through ecclesiastical bounds and began to effect all points of life. Every social class became engrossed in the dispute. Religious questions and political issues became entangled. The royalty of the House of Orange took up the cause of strict, fatalistic Calvinism while political opponents, led by Hugo Grotius, stood for Arminianism.

In 1617, Prince Maurice of Orange, the head of the political regime of the House of Orange, declared himself for Calvinism. He soon found occasion to imprison Grotius and the other leading advocates of Arminianism. With these men out of the way, he called a synod to meet in Dort for the purpose of crushing the Arminians.

The Synod of Dort was attended by various foreign deputies but was primarily a national group called to settle the Arminian question in Holland. At the fourth session of the conference it was decided to call in Simon Episcopius and some of the other Arminian remonstrants and charge them with heresy.

Accordingly, Episcopius and 12 others appeared before the Dort Synod. The Arminian deputies from the other countries were allowed to sit in on the deliberation but were not allowed opportunity to express themselves. When the 13 remonstrants appeared, Episcopius took the meeting by storm. He immediately launched into a bold and outspoken defense of the Arminian views. He accused the synod of being a schismatic assembly because they would not allow a full defense of the Arminian views.

The Arminians were asked to file documentary proof of their contentions with the Synod. The group then proceeded to catechise them and, objecting to the manner in which it was done, the Arminians refused to answer any of the questions. They were excluded from the meetings and the Synod condemned their doctrine as dangerous and heretic.

The leaders were sentenced to banishment from Holland and some of them were eventually executed. Episcopius was banished but after the death of Prince Maurice, he returned and became the first president of the Remonstrant College at Amsterdam in 1634. This was the first educational institution of any consequence that taught Arminian theology.

With the ascendancy of Episcopius and the college which he headed, Arminianism began to spread over the continent. In a short time

England and Wales were seething with the arguments, with the cause of Calvinism finding a stronghold in Scotland among the Presbyterians.

In England and Wales the story was different. These places were caught between two fires and the idea of a doctrine of "Free Salvation" and "Free Will" found fertile soil.

Puritanism and Calvinism had served to make political and religious slaves out of the masses of people in England and Wales. Puritanism, like Arminianism, had its origin in Holland. William of Orange used it as a means of bringing a semblance of civil liberty to his people. Puritanism sought to "survey the political aspects of all moral and civil questions and give direction to human forces to build up a country on sound principles of human freedom . . ."

Like many other good things, Puritanism became perverted and at last settled like a millstone about the necks of those who sought political and religious emancipation. The Puritanical decrees became unbearable and the people came to hate the Puritans with an evil ugliness. Persecution came upon them and they left the continent under stress to go to the new land of America for a new start.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RISE OF THE BAPTISTS

In point of organization historically, the Baptist movement, as such, was rather slow in development. This was due to the fact that Baptists held to unique opinions on many views which branded them as heretics in many circles. Three of these views will be mentioned and treated with brevity here.

1. The competency of the individual with God. Baptists have always held that there is no place for the priest or the sacrament, but that Christ, the mediator, is all that is necessary. They further state that each one must be reconciled to God for himself, that the Church is composed of born-again believers, and that this salvation is by personal faith and not by baptism or any other rite or sacrament.

2. Baptism is by immersion and is to be administered to believers alone. Baptists have never believed in infant baptism, holding that baptism is not a sacrament and that it does not bestow salvation or any other good upon infants or any others, but that infants are saved without reference to baptism.

3. The first Baptists (General) were Arminian in doctrine as opposed to the prevailing Calvinism of their day. This position brought on them opposition and persecution of the severest kind.

4. The church and state should be separate and function each in its own sphere: The church in things pertaining to the spiritual well-being of the individual, and the state to the political. This last point gained much public approbation for the Baptist cause as we shall see later.

Some of the early sects which give rise to Baptist principles must be treated with in order to get a well-rounded view of the train of thought. Please bear in mind as you read that each of these groups in its historical development contributes to the story of our own Free Will Baptist rise and growth. Remember also that as the General Baptists of England emerge from this picture that you are getting a glimpse of the very beginning of our own denomination.

Among the earliest of these groups was the Petrobrusian movement. This sect originated in southern France and took its name from Peter of Bruys, who was burned at the stake in 1126. The Petrobrusians were characterized by the following tenets:

1. They held to the scriptures as their sole authority, rejecting any other authority.

2. They believed the church to be a spiritual body, consisting only of believers.

3. They believed that baptism should not be administered to children before the age of understanding.

4. They denied transubstantiation (that under the blessing of the priest the bread actually became Christ's body and the wine his blood), purgatory, prayers for the dead, and the use of the cross as a sacred symbol.

5. They asserted that all churches should be pulled down, probably a reaction against the idolatrous rites then practiced in all the churches they knew.

About 50 years later the Waldensian movement had its beginning when one Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyons, gave up everything he owned in order to preach a purer gospel in southern France. His first followers were more like the Methodists than Baptists. They were strongly opposed to the Catholics and claimed apostolic succession through themselves.

A small portion of them rejected infant baptism and because they did not regard a corrupt priest as a qualified administrator of baptism, they demanded rebaptism of all who sought admission into their churches. Some historians hold that they did not practice baptism by immersion, while the weight of historical opinion says that they were immersionists.

Growing out of the John Huss movement, there came the Tabornites in Bohemia in the 15th century. They owed their rise partly to the influence of Wycliffe in England and the Waldenses in France. They (1) appealed to the scriptures in matters of faith and practice, (2) denied baptismal regeneration and transubstantiation, and (3) practiced infant baptism.

Another Bohemian group came into prominence in 1467 known as the Bohemian Brethren. According to the teachings of their leader, Peter Chelcicky, they regarded the apostolic church as the true model, from which nothing should be taken away or to which nothing should be added. They rebaptized all who became members of their body, but wavering at first on the matter of infant baptism, finally accepted it.

All those groups, except perhaps the Petrobrusians, are considered together as Waldenses. By the end of the 15th century they were the



largest sect in southern Germany and they had numerous adherents in Prussia, Poland, and Austria. There were 400 congregations numbering 200,000 members in Bohemia and Moravia alone, among which were many powerful and influential political leaders. Another 200,000 were located in Italy and in other places in Europe than named above. They translated the scriptures in their tongues and between 1456 and 1517 published 14 editions of the German Bible, 4 of the Dutch Bible, and 98 of the Latin Bible.

By the early part of the 16th century there were two distinct lines of development among evangelical Christians. In 1507, Luther took the first steps leading to the Reformation and the greater part of the Waldensian movement joined him. About 1525 those who are known as Anabaptists began to be found in Germany, Switzerland, and other European countries. They stood for (1) the divine inspiration and authority of the scriptures, (2) liberty of the conscience and freedom of the will, and (3) believer's baptism. Many able scholars among this group defended the doctrines with such vigor and skill that the Anabaptists were branded by Roman Catholics as the worst of heretics.

Too, sharp conflict arose between them and the Protestant groups who believed in infant baptism. In addition to this, no discrimination was made between them and some others who were mystics and fanatics holding every shade of belief, so along with them, they were subjected to the most destructive persecution that ever shadowed the pages of Christianity. By 1520, two thousand Anabaptists, among them many leaders of the movement, were executed. A few years later another 1,600 were put to death in Tyrol, Italy. The remnant found a haven in Moravia, where for nearly a hundred years they were safe. Shortly thereafter, many of their successors in the faith were put to death in a most horrible slaughter.

A grave mistake made by these early Anabaptists was the preaching of the doctrine of millenarianism. The mistake lay in the fact that these were times of persecution and preached as it was to people of low literacy, it soon developed into vicious fanaticism. Jan Matthys, a Dutch Anabaptist who assumed the role of Enoch, and John of Leyden and Gerton Gloster who were named as his deputies, began to preach that the Lord was coming immediately to deliver His saints and punish their persecutors.

In 1534 they were able to gather at Munster, in Westphalia, great hordes of simple-minded Dutch and German peasants. Matthys de-



clared that God had revealed to him that Munster was to be the New Jerusalem and that his people should possess it at once. They drove the Catholics and Lutherans from the city and set up Matthys as king. After a few weeks, Matthys was killed and John of Leyden became king.

On the basis of an alleged divine revelation, John established polygamy and immediately took four wives for himself, one of whom he later beheaded with his own hand in the market place for infidelity. Such gross sin and immorality continued for more than a year until in June, 1535, a band of besiegers under the leadership of the expelled bishops succeeded in taking the city. They tortured John and his lieutenants cruelly before putting them to death.

The Munster episode gave more reason than ever for Anabaptist persecution and in a short while they were all but exterminated in every country except Holland. It was about this time that Menno Simon, a Catholic priest, was converted to the Anabaptist doctrine on infant baptism. He organized societies of Anabaptists and taught them to avoid all extravagances and fanaticism such as had been displayed at Munster.

Their quiet and peaceful way of life soon attracted others and they began to grow in numbers. They were opposed to taking part in civil affairs and in war, and this latter view brought on renewed persecution in later years. This group is now known as Mennonites, and is to be found largely in our own country today.

The persecution of Anabaptists in the continent after the Munster incident forced many of them to seek refuge abroad. These refugees brought the Anabaptist movement to England and Wales. When news of these was first brought to King Henry VIII, he ordered that they should either be expelled or exterminated. Men, women and children were burned at the stake.

Henry's successors were just as relentless as their father had been in their efforts to rid the kingdom of the despised Anabaptists. There was only one place to flee after 1580, and that was back to Holland, where again all creeds were tolerated. The migration of persecuted Christians continued from England to Holland until James the First had been ruler in England for several years.

## CHAPTER IV

### ARMINIAN BAPTISTS IN ENGLAND

In the presentation of this portion of our Free Will Baptist story, we are coming closer to our present-day status. This chapter will carry in it the first actual connection with the early Free Will Baptists on the continent of North America. It would be well just here to review the highlights of the preceding chapters so as to establish the connection throughout. Perhaps this brief outline will help:

I. The early predominance of hyper-Calvinism in religious life as advanced by John Calvin. Review the five cardinal points of his doctrine.

II. The introduction of Arminianism by Koornhert and Jacobus Arminius and the striking contrast between the doctrines of Calvin and Arminius. Review the comparisons in the table given in the second chapter.

III. The opposition to Arminianism and the alignment of forces on either side.

IV. The departure from Calvinism by new religious groups as they appear and the advent of new differences, such as mode of baptism, ecclesiastical order and authority, infant baptism, apostolic succession, transubstantiation, and separation of church and state.

V. Rise of the Anabaptist movement and its effect on the religious world.

VI. The Reformation and its subsequent influence, followed by persecution and a struggle for church supremacy.

Having fastened these salient facts in mind, we are ready to follow the rise of the Baptist movement in England and thence to the North American continent where the Free Will Baptist denomination came into actuality during the 18th century.

History records the fact of the existence of Anabaptist churches in England during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I. However, it is to the Separate Baptists that we must turn for a complete account of the Baptist movement in England.

Robert Brown, a Puritan preacher and teacher, began the movement for the Separate Baptists about 1580. He preached a pure democracy in church government and insisted that it was both the right and duty of Christians to withdraw from corrupt churches.

Those who followed him in this "come-out" movement were called "Separatists."

A Separatist church was organized at Gainsborough, sixty miles north of London in 1602 under the leadership of John Smyth, who was a graduate of Cambridge and one of the first scholars of his time. He had been a minister in the Church of England for a short time but had come out against prevailing corruptness in the church.

Among the members of this Separatist Church were John Robinson, William Brewster, and William Bradford, all of whom were to figure prominently in colonial history. They later withdrew and established a church at Scrooby. In 1607 they went to Amsterdam and the next year to Leyden. They met with poor encouragement in these places and on petition, they were allowed by the English government in 1620 to lead the colony to Plymouth Rock.

About 1606 or 1607, Smyth and many of the members of his church left Gainsborough under persecution and went to Amsterdam, Holland, where there was "freedom of worship for all men." They organized a church there which was called "The Second Church of Amsterdam," inasmuch as there was already a church there called "The Ancient Church." In a short while Smyth was at odds with the Ancient Church. He contended that true spiritual worship was hindered by the use of hymn books and a printed Bible, unless that Bible was in the original Hebrew or Greek. In 1609, Smyth and his church came out against infant baptism and declared the Ancient Church to be in gross error. Smyth and his followers renounced their former baptism, dissolved their church, and entered into a new and different covenant.

This new group was faced with a grave problem. There was no baptized person among them. This question was settled when Symth baptized himself and then proceeded to baptize the others of his company. This act of Smyth in baptizing himself was immediately set upon by his opponents who branded him as "Smyth, the Se-Baptist." This opposition aroused in Smyth an uncertainty as to the right of himself and his congregation to institute a new baptism. He adopted many of the Mennonite views and sought to turn his members to that group.

A minority of the group, led by Thomas Helwys and John Murton, deposed Smyth and thirty of the members. The nine or ten remaining members kept the church intact and in 1611 and 1612 they decided to go back to England. Accordingly they returned to London and

built their first church at Newgate. By 1626 they had grown to five churches and in 1644 there were forty-seven churches. In 1660, their membership had increased to 20,000.

All these churches were known as General Baptists, a name which signified that they were not Calvinistic, but Arminian in theology.<sup>1</sup> It is to one variety of these General Baptists that the Free Will Baptists owe their origin, since Paul Palmer was of that faith.

Since we are now in the act of establishing our historical basis, let us see about doctrinal and practical aspects of these General (Free) Baptists. It has been established that from the very first they were opposed to infant baptism. Their first confession of faith shows that they stood for liberty of conscience and democracy in church government. They also believed in and practiced open communion and were immersionists in their practice of baptism. In the year 1660, all the General Baptist churches of England, numbering 20,000 members, sent representatives to London, where they formulated and put forth a Confession of Faith. Article II of this confession stated,

"That the right and only way of gathering churches, is first to teach or preach the Gospel to the sons and daughters of men, and then to baptize."<sup>2</sup>

Another article of the Confession of Faith of the General Baptists had to do with the church-state relationship. It stated that,

"Civil government is recognized as having a right to the allegiance and support of members of the church, in peace, with tribute, customs, and all other duties, and in war with their lives and all that they have . . ."

It further states that,

"the magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience to force or compel men to this or that form of religion or doctrine."

This position in itself did much in clearing the way for the progress of the General Baptist Church. No longer could they be declared enemies of government and society and even their bitterest foes admitted that they were "neither heretics nor schismatics, but tender-hearted Christians."

The progress of the General Baptists was at first painfully slow. The church that returned from Amsterdam probably numbered about

<sup>1</sup> Crosby, *History of England Baptists*. Vol. II. Appendix IX.

<sup>2</sup> Crosby, *op. cit.* Vol. II, Appendix IV.



forty members. In fifteen years they had churches in London, Lincoln, Sarum, Coventry, and Tiverton. In Crosby's *History of English Baptists*, a reference is made to a pamphlet published about 1620 in which the General Baptists are said to be making "multitudes of disciples." In 1614 they began publishing their views and pleading for liberty of conscience in a series of tracts, said to be the ablest expositions on that doctrine still extant. After 1626, with the accession of Charles I, severe measures were taken to suppress all dissenters and Puritans and to drive them from the kingdom. In spite of this, the General Baptists continued to grow and by 1690 they reported 30,000 members.

Another hindrance to growth of the General Baptists was that fact that they were Arminian. This caused them to be regarded with suspicion in a nation that was sold on Calvinism as was England in the first half of the 17th century. Arminianism was classed by orthodox writers of that time with Socinianism and Pelagianism. However, before 1640 many of the higher churchmen of the Church of England had become Arminians, among which was William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. This in itself is testimony of the attractiveness of the doctrine to the popular mind.

After Laud, in 1640, had ceased in his efforts to Episcopalize England, the Presbyterians sought to establish their church as the state church. Their leaders stated publicly their abhorrence of toleration in religious matters and besought Parliament to "forbid all dipping (baptism by immersion) and take the inevitable course with all dippers—burn them at the stake." They refused to make any concession to the Independents and were joined in this stand by many London ministers. Accordingly Parliament passed severe laws against "dippers" and other heretics.

The Presbyterian regime was ended in 1654 by Cromwell who put in its place a kind of state church. According to one historian this church, "recognized no one form of ecclesiastical organization; it had no church courts, no church assemblies, no church laws or ordinances. Nothing was said about rites or ceremonies, nothing even about the sacraments. The mode of administering the Lord's Supper and . . . baptism was left an open question to be determined by each congregation for itself . . . The church buildings were regarded as the property of the several parishes and in one was to be found a Presbyterian minister, in another an Independent, and in a third a Baptist." This era under Cromwell came to be known as the Time of the Protectorate.

About 1647, during the Protectorate, a new doctrine arose which wooed many of the persecuted and harried Baptists to its embrace. It was known as Quakerism and was fostered by George Fox, who preached the doctrine of the Inner Light. He was a zealous and able preacher and was able in a short time to win many followers. He made such deep inroads in London among Baptists that reports became widespread that all Baptists had become Quakers. However, the Baptists came up with a "burning and powerful plea for Biblical Christianity against the views of the Quakers and Ranters." One concession that was made by these Baptists to the Quaker doctrine was that the ministry need not be supported. The ground thus yielded has never been entirely regained.

In spite of the fact that Cromwell had offered protection for the Baptists, there were many in England who had not approved his action. Upon his death, Charles II was invited to return to the throne, which he did. Almost immediately a group of Baptists presented a petition pledging him their fidelity and asking for his guarantee of religious liberty. The king gave his word that "none should trouble them on account of their consciences in things pertaining to religion."

Whether or not he was conscientious in this matter is a matter of speculation. The fact remains that almost immediately horrible persecution broke out and riotous parties, composed of the enemies of Puritanism and the partisans of the Episcopacy rode about the country with swords, and pistols, hunting out non-conformists, ransacking houses and terrorizing all in their wake. This lasted for ten or twelve years before it finally spent itself.

The effect of this persecution was to draw the Baptists, both General and Particular, closer together and the General Baptists showed a willingness to compromise with their Particular Baptist brethren on the matter of their greatest difference, Arminianism and Calvinism. For awhile it seemed that the two groups would come to terms. But in 1689 these hopes were dashed to the ground when the Particular Baptists adopted a creed with a greater emphasis on Calvinism, which became a vicious form of hyper-Calvinism. Of such belief was the famous Dr. Ryland when he said to young William Carey, who was urging the missionary obligation on English Baptists, "Sit down, young man, when the Lord gets ready to convert the heathen, he will do it without your help or mine."

All of these happenings combined—the doctrinal errors, the per-

sonal jealousies, the denominational desires for supremacy, the rigidity of Puritanism, the terrible persecutions, and the awful indifference to religious truth, brought about a deeply unsettled condition in England and Wales, so that with the opening up of the New World for colonization, many people were ready to venture out, led by the hope that with such new beginning in a new world they would find the long-sought-for Utopia where they could live and worship unmolested.

## CHAPTER V

### RELIGION IN THE COLONIES

In order to properly expedite the settlement of the colonies in North America, the King of England granted to certain men or parties of men colonial charters. The areas settled under these charters were known as colonies. There were six of these colonies which will claim our attention in this phase of our Free Will Baptist story, viz., Jamestown, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Virginia and North Carolina.

Each of these will be discussed in relation to the political and religious happenings as they effect the founding and establishing of Free Will Baptist churches. Please bear in mind that the term "General Baptist" as used until we come to a study of North Carolina refers to those Arminian groups which gave rise to our denomination.

The Jamestown colony was the first permanent English colony in the new world and was established in 1607. This colony never knew religious toleration for the established church would not brook non-conformity in any fashion. Many laws were designed to repress dissenters and to foster the established church. No one dared think in terms other than one church; a church which dominated every phase of political, social, and religious life with a dangerous jealousy. No record of a Baptist group or any other dissenting group has ever been found in the history of the Jamestown colony.

The Massachusetts colony (1620) has a different history. The Puritans were the dominant element here and they sought to perpetuate Puritanism in its most austere form. They sought to do so by preventing the intrusion of any other religion. For a hundred years they used every foul and fiendish means imaginable to keep out other groups.

They imposed fines, used the whipping post and stocks, imprisoned men, and burned at the stake at the slightest provocation. So severe were their persecutions that King Charles II sent a rebuke from England in which he branded such action as "a severity the more to be wondered at, whereas liberty of conscience was made a principal motive for your transportation thither."

One of these instances of persecution in Massachusetts colony was the banishment of Roger Williams in 1636 for refusing to preach



as ordered by the colonial authorities. He went to what is now Rhode Island where he soon made peace with the native Indians and settled himself. He says in his memoirs, "Having made covenant of peaceful neighborhood with all the . . . natives round about us, and having in a sense of God's merciful providence to me in my distress, called the place Providence, I desired that it might be a shelter for persons distressed for conscience." Here was established the first civil government in the world which, having power to refuse, yet granted full liberty of conscience in matters of religion.

In March, 1639, Roger Williams organized the first Baptist church in America. This church was neither wholly General nor wholly Particular. It had no regular meeting place, assembling in private homes or outdoors. Among the members were several General Baptists from England and others of the same persuasion came later. Soon Arminians became a majority in the church and remained so for a good while. However, the group split over the question of laying on of hands. Williams himself believed that it was a necessary adjunct to immediately follow baptism and as a pre-requisite to admission to the Lord's Supper. Many early Baptists believed that the first principles of Christ were six, to be found in Hebrews 6:1, 2. They were:

1. Repentance from dead works
2. Faith towards God
3. The doctrine of baptism
4. The laying on of hands
5. Resurrection of the dead
6. Eternal judgment

Those who held these views became known as Six Principle Baptists and for many years the General Baptists seem to have generally accepted these principles. In 1652 the Providence church split and one group followed Thomas Olney in rejecting the laying on of hands. The second group under Williams prospered and increased in numbers and strength. Their church continues to this day as a regular Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island.

A second Baptist Church was organized in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1641 or 1642 by John Clarke. This was a Particular Baptist Church. Clarke died in 1676 and was succeeded as pastor by Obadiah Holmes, who in 1651 had been cruelly whipped for preaching the gospel in Lynn, Massachusetts. Then in 1725 John Comer became pastor. He soon became unsettled about the doctrine of laying on

of hands and for a while associated with the General (Free Will) Baptists.

In a diary which he kept he mentions the fact that Paul Palmer had written to him in 1729 that two years before he had established a General (Free-will) Baptist Church in North Carolina. He also tells of the "Yearly Association" of the General Baptists which met in 1729 at Newport at which 32 delegates, among which were 8 ministers and 3 deacons, representing 13 district bodies in Rhode Island, Long Island, Connecticut, and New York, were present.

In 1681 a charter of colonization was granted by Charles II to William Penn. This charter, like all others granted by King Charles, guaranteed full religious liberties to all who came to the colony. Even though Penn made Pennsylvania a refuge for Quakers he also invited any and all religions to partake of the freedom of his colony. About the same time New Jersey came under the control of the Quakers and she was also thrown open to seekers for religious freedom. As a result the dissenters of every faith flocked to these two colonies. In three years the population had reached 7,200. Many Baptist churches were organized in these colonies.

In 1703 a Baptist church from Pembrokeshire, Wales, came, pastor and all, to Welsh Tract, on the Delaware river in northern Pennsylvania. This church introduced singing, imposition of hands and church covenant among the Baptist churches and was of the Arminian belief.

Virginia, along with Massachusetts, was probably the most severe of all the colonies in respect to intolerance. As Massachusetts was the stronghold of Puritanism, so Virginia was the citadel of the established church. By an act of law, the Church of England was made the state church in Virginia. This summary has been written of religious conditions in Virginia during the following years:

" . . . by the laws of the colony, any person daring to teach the people doctrines or practices other than those prescribed by the Church of England were to be imprisoned until they should be reclaimed, or if they could not be reclaimed, sent to England for punishment; that every person in the colony, male and female, was obligated when called upon to go to the minister and give a true statement of his or her faith; to attend the Episcopal service every Sabbath; and to be present and answer publicly, whenever the minister should catechize; that no minister not conformed to the Church of England should, under severest penalty, be allowed to teach or preach, publicly or privately; that every colonist should pay his assessed proportion of the taxes for the support of the Episcopal Church; that no catechism should be taught other than that

contained in the Book of Common Prayer; that any person not conforming to the church, absence from the services of which was to be the proof, was to pay a fine of \$100 a month, and if not reclaimed within twelve months, was to be imprisoned until he did conform, and give the church security that he would maintain his conformity; and everyone was compelled by fines to have his children baptized. Informers were encouraged by the payment to them of half the fines imposed upon the offenders."<sup>1</sup>

In the face of these facts, let us look now at the bright spot on the otherwise cloudy scene. Rhode Island remained a haven of religious freedom in spite of the threats and intimidations from the other colonies. The northeast colonies threatened to cut off Rhode Island from all social and business intercourse, but this did not materialize.

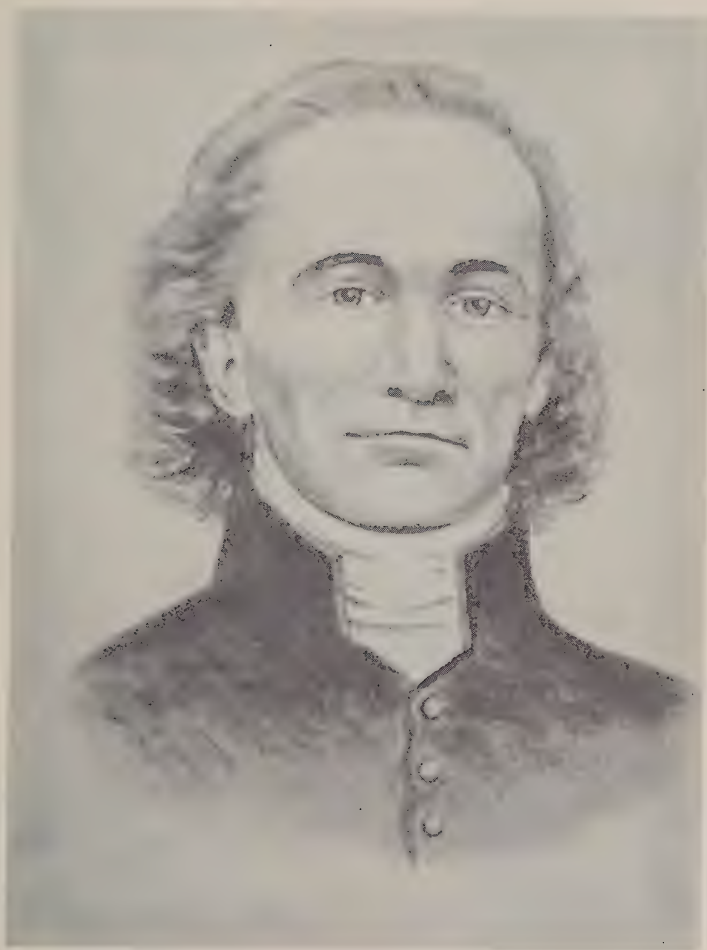
Although the Quaker views were strongly disapproved of by Roger Williams openly in public debate, still they were given a refuge in Rhode Island. Here they came, fleeing from persecution in Massachusetts and were entertained in the houses of the citizens of Rhode Island as long as they wanted to stay. The only reason that more seekers for religious liberty did not come to this haven was that the territory was too limited to attract immigrants.

A very pressing need was for a vast area to be colonized which would offer all that Rhode Island offered by way of toleration, plus plenty of territory to attract the immigrants. In view of this fact a group of men sought a charter for the area embracing all the territory east of the Mississippi river and south of Virginia, Florida excepted. They were granted a charter in 1663 and opened up the colony to settlers, to be known as North Carolina. At this time there were nearly a thousand settlers in the section known as Albemarle, with a settlement in Perquamins. By 1676 there were 3,000, but fifty years later the population had reached 30,000.

In North Carolina a wide departure was made from prevailing religious conditions in the other colonies, where for the most part intolerance was the order of the day. From the very outset the lord proprietors made it known most emphatically that North Carolina was to be a haven for religious freedom. Under terms of the charter they had rights which amounted to almost monarchical powers, the only restriction being that they should always recognize the sovereignty of the King of England and not violate the rights of the subjects of England. The fee from the proprietors was to be 20 marks a year rental (about \$200) and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of all the metals mined in their colony.

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<sup>1</sup> R. B. C. Howell, *Early Baptists in Virginia*, p. 47.



BENJAMIN N. RANDALL  
February 7, 1749      October 22, 1808



# Executive Secretaries



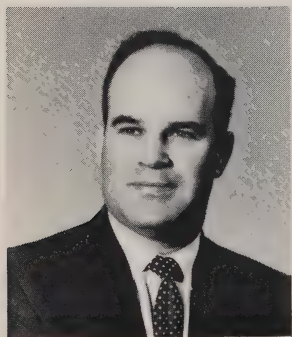
L. R. ENNIS  
1941-42



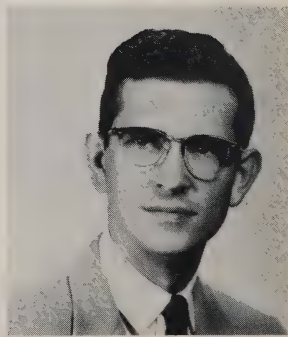
ROBERT B. CRAWFORD  
1943-47



HENRY MELVIN  
1948



DAMON C. DODD  
1949-52



W. S. MOONEYHAM  
1953-

In the charter for North Carolina the matter of religious freedom was set out in Article 18, which authorized the proprietors to grant liberty to those "who cannot, in their private opinions, conform to the public exercises of religion, according to the liturgy, forms, and ceremonies of the Church of England, or take and subscribe the oaths and articles, made and established in that behalf." This guarantee of religious freedom was used as the "selling point" for the North Carolina colony for many years.

In August, 1663, further declaration of religious freedom to be found in the North Carolina colony was made and set forth as follows:

"No person or persons to whom such liberty shall be given shall be in any way molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question, for any differences in opinion, or practice in matters of religious concernment, who do not actually disturb the civil peace of the province, county, or colony, that they make their abode in: but all and every such person or persons may, from time to time, and at all times, freely and quietly have and enjoy his and their judgments and consciences, in matters of religion, throughout all the said province or colony, they behaving themselves peaceably, and not using this liberty to licentiousness, nor to civil injury, or outward disturbance of others; any law, statute or clause contained or to be contained, usage or custom of our realm of England, to the contrary hereof, in any wise notwithstanding."

This attraction of Carolina was kept before the people of England by every known means. In 1666, a pamphlet advertising the Carolina colony carried the following:

"If therefore any industrious and ingenious persons shall be willing to partake of the felicities of this country, let them embrace the first opportunity, that they may obtain the greater advantages.

"The chief of the privileges are as follows: First, there shall be full liberty of conscience granted to all, so that no man is to be molested or called in question for matters of religious concern; but every one is to be obedient to the Civil government, worshipping God after their own way."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hawks, *History of North Carolina*, Vol. II.

## CHAPTER VI

### BEGINNINGS IN CAROLINA

Events in England seemed to be timed precisely with the Carolina colony's offer of religious freedom. In 1662 Parliament passed the first of three acts designed to completely suppress all classes of dissenters. The first was the uniformity act in May, 1662. It provided that all ministers who would not declare their assent to the Articles of the Church of England and to everything contained in the Prayer Book, and who would not take an oath never to bear arms against the king, were to be denied all their ecclesiastical income and protection. The second act came in 1664 and was known as the Conventicle Act. It forbade any minister to officiate at, or to attend, a religious service not conducted according to the liturgy of the Church of England. The Five Mile Act, which was the third one, was passed in 1665 and forbade a dissenting minister to live within five miles of an incorporated town.

The plight of the "dissenting minister" is summarized by Macauley in chapter 7 of *History of England* thus:

"The Act of Uniformity had ejected him, in spite of royal promises, from a benefice to beggary and dependence. The Five Mile Act had banished him from his dwelling, from his relations, from his friends, from all places of public resort. Under the Conventicle Act his goods had been distrained; and he had been flung into one noisome gaol after another among highwaymen and housebreakers. Out of prison he constantly had the officers of justice on his track; he had been forced to pay hush money to informers; he had stolen, in ignominious disguises, through windows and trapdoors, to meet his flock, and had, while baptising or presiding at the Lord's Supper, been anxiously waiting for the signal that the tipstaves were approaching."

Baptists and Quakers suffered the most under these laws. It was during this time that John Bunyan languished in prison for twelve years and gave *Pilgrim's Progress* to the world. However, Bunyan was not the only minister to feel the brunt of this persecution. Many others among the Baptist and Quaker ministry suffered like fates, as did also countless hundreds of lay members.

Macauley says "men and women by sevens were brought before justices especially fired with persecuting zeal and were committed to prisons . . . where they were made to share the same cells with

violent and degraded criminals, or left to starve and die of neglect." At Ailsbury in Buckinghamshire, ten men and two women were condemned to death for persisting in Baptist worship, and were saved from execution only by petition to the king.

What effect did the promise of religious freedom in the Carolina colony have on these persecuted dissenters? On first thought, it would appear that they would have been glad to escape to the new world. However, there were several reasons why, in spite of persecution, they might prefer to remain at home.

1). News of persecution in the new world had reached England and to go there might be to exchange bad conditions for worse.

2). Many could not bring themselves to break home ties and risk the perilous ocean voyage to America.

3). The cost of the journey (approximately 30,000 pounds per person) was prohibitive.

4). The land had been pictured as a wilderness full of lions, tigers, and cougars, infested by rattlesnakes and copperheads, and inhabited by fierce, bloodthirsty savages.

5). The death rate in the new world was alarmingly high.

That the perils were well-known and greatly dreaded was attested to by the fact that the severest penalty for violation of the Conventicle Act was banishment for seven years to some American colony.

In spite of all this, many dissenters were induced to leave England and come to America and settle in the Carolina colony, drawn thither by the guarantee of religious toleration and a chance to begin and enjoy a new life.

At the height of the persecution in England, the Pennsylvania colony was thrown open for colonization and many dissenters swarmed into it. Among the others, the celebrated Welsh Baptist church in its entirety came and settled on the Delaware river in the region later known as the Welsh Tract. Many representatives from this group later moved into Carolina, among which were families of Parkers, Smiths, and Palmers, of which we will learn more later.

For our historical information we will refer many times to *A History of General Baptists* by Knight. He says that there were Baptists in the Kehuckee region as early as 1690 and that they joined with like churches in Virginia to form a Yearly Meeting in 1720. As to the General Baptists in Virginia, Knight avers that a number



of them had come from England and settled in Isle of Wight County, Virginia, in 1700.

Since they had brought no preacher with them, they wrote the brethren in London to send one. Accordingly, Thomas White and Robert Nordin were ordained and sent to them but White died en route and only Nordin arrived. He organized a church in Prince George County and at Burley, and pastored until his death in 1725. He was succeeded by Richard Jones, who was a personal friend of Paul Palmer, and is mentioned in a letter from Palmer to Rev. John Comer as follows: "There is a comely little church in the Isle of Wight County, of about 30 or 40 members, the Elder of which is one Richard Jones, a very sensible old gentleman, whom I have great love for . . . ."

The Carolina colony proved to be fertile soil for the General Baptists and groups of them began to hold informal services in many places, but had no organized churches. The following excerpt taken from the Baptist Historical Papers gives a good picture of the prevailing circumstances:

"In 1739 the preaching places of Rev. John Holmes, a missionary of the Church of England, were as follows: At the houses of Joseph Sims, Henry Jones, Henry Walker, Capt. Joseph Lane, Bertie Courthouse, Mr. Maney's Chapel. The Rev. Giles Rainsford preached in the shade of a mulberry tree. Clement Hall preached under the shade of trees because the congregations were too large for houses. These gatherings were held in every settlement. If a minister were present he preached. In the absence of a minister, any brother might speak. . . ."

Although these meetings were held during this period, there is no evidence of any organized group of worshipers nor of any church building owned or used by Baptists.

In the *History of North Carolina Baptists* by George W. Paschall, he states, "It is hardly possible that there was any regularly organized congregation of Baptists in the Province or any Baptist preacher before Paul Palmer.

"Neither church nor preacher, if they had been here, could easily have escaped notice in the small population of that time; the peculiar tenets and practices of the Baptists and the evangelical appeal of the Baptist preachers would have excited no little commotion among the people as well as comment by all who spoke on the religious affairs of the Province, just as was caused a few years later by the preaching of Paul Palmer."

When one recalls the risk which had to be taken in order to ex-

press personal religious conviction, it becomes an act worthy of deeper appreciation than ever before. The people in Carolina, even though given unusual liberties, were yet under somewhat of a strain and the result was that they did not feel perfectly at ease in exercising their prerogative. The other colonies, (particularly the Virginia colony) were vigorously opposed to any form of religious freedom that didn't recognize the Church of England as the one and only church. In his book, *History of North Carolina Baptists*, page 56, the author, G. W. Paschall, says:

"The facts now before us show that by the laws of the colony, any persons daring to teach the people doctrines or practices, other than those prescribed by the Church of England, were to be imprisoned until they should be reclaimed, or if they could not be reclaimed, sent to England for punishment; that every person in the colony, male and female, was obliged, when called upon, to go to the minister and give a true statement of his or her true faith; to attend the Episcopal service every Sabbath day; and to be present and answer publicly, whenever the minister should catechize; that no minister not conformed to the Church of England, should, under the severest penalties, be permitted to preach or teach publicly or privately; that every colonist should pay his assessed proportion of the taxes for the support of the Episcopal church; that no catechism should be taught but that contained in the Common Book of Prayer; that any person not conforming to the church, absence from the services of which was to be proof, was to pay a fine of a hundred dollars a month, and if not reclaimed within twelve months, was to be imprisoned until he did conform, and give the church security that he would maintain his conformity; and everyone was compelled by fines to have his children baptised. These and similar laws, the Governor, the Council of State, and the Ministers of religion, all ready enough to it, were enjoined to execute; and to make the punishment sure, informers were suborned by the payment to them of one-half the fines imposed on the offenders."

The fact that such as this was prevalent in the other colonies made the liberties granted in the North Carolina colony seem even greater. Of this colony it was said, "In the magnificent domain of Carolina, embracing practically all the territory east of the Mississippi river and south of Virginia, except Florida, everyone was to have the right to freedom of conscience and liberty to choose his own religion and form of worship unmolested by the state. This was to be a government where the preacher might preach with Episcopal ordination or without it, use the liturgy of the Church of England or use no liturgy except one of his own, baptise his children or let them go unbaptised, contend for the baptism of believers alone or contend that baptism is no longer to be administered, celebrate the Lord's Supper every week or regard it as no longer a necessary ordinance,

be Episcopalian, Catholic, Quaker, Independent, Puritan, Mennonite, attend church services or not attend them. So long as one's religion did not disturb the well-being of society one was free to believe and worship and do as he pleased . . ."

Such fertile soil was ideal for the seeds of the doctrine advocated and preached by Paul Palmer and his associates and it is small wonder that they got off to such a good start. Their positive message of salvation to all, seasoned with individual liberty in the matter of choice and charged with a challenge to holiness of life and character, exactly fitted into the background provided for them in North Carolina.

## CHAPTER VII

### A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

Having come now in our Free Will Baptist story to the man who is regarded as the organizer of the first Free Will Baptist church, let us turn aside from history and regard this great man of God, Paul Palmer.

Benedict, the Baptist historian, states that Palmer was a native of Maryland but does not give a birthdate. He was baptized at Welsh Tract by Owen Thomas, the pastor of the church there. His reason was that he was of the Arminian persuasion and the Welsh Tract church was Calvinistic, as is seen from the original records of the church which begin, "Welsh Tract Baptist meeting, professing believer's baptism, laying on of hands, election and final perseverance in grace."

Edwards states that Palmer went to Connecticut for ordination and afterwards carried on a fruitful ministry in New Jersey and Maryland, eventually going to North Carolina where he started the Free Will Baptist movement.

In 1720 Palmer settled in Perquimans Precinct where by 1729 he had an estate of 964 acres. He married Johanna Laker Peterson, the widow of Thomas Peterson who at his death had left his wife and an infant daughter, Anne, and 400 acres of land, which was later sold for a goodly sum. Two children were born to Paul Palmer and his wife, a daughter named Martha and a son, Samuel.

The Palmers came into the public eye shortly after coming to Perquimans when they were brought unto court on the charge of aiding and abetting in the stealing of a Negro from Thomas Crisp.

It seemed that the whole thing came about when Cush, a Negro belonging to the Palmers, went to Mr. Crisp's plantation and brought away a Negro named Sambo, along with all his equipment including a new bed spread, a coat, shirt, one pair of new leather breeches, new shoes, and one hat. It is said that the whole thing was carried out in broad daylight, that Cush drove a two-horse wagon, and that no effort at concealment was made.

In the trial that followed, one delay after another was had. Finally in March of 1722 the case was dismissed against Mr. and Mrs. Palmer because no witnesses appeared against them.



Neither of them lost anything by way of popular favor or reputation as a result of this incident. A year later Mr. Palmer was named on the permanent jury in Edenton in the same court that had exonerated him three years before.

It was several years before Palmer attracted any serious attention by his preaching. In 1726 he was already engaged in evangelistic efforts and his first field was in Chowan County, north of what is now Poplar Run, and extending to Warwick Swamp on the present boundary of Gates County.

Reference to Mr. Palmer is made by Rev. John Comer, a graduate of both Harvard and Yale who wrote much on Baptist history. In getting this information he had correspondence with Palmer and the North Carolina Baptists. In his *Diary*, under date of September 27, 1729, this entry appears: "This day I received a letter from ye Baptist church in North Carolina, settled about two years (in ye year 1727) since, by Mr. Paul Palmer, signed by Paul Palmer, John Parker, John Jordan, Benjamin Evans, John Parker, John Brinkley, Michael Brinkley, Thomas Darker, James Copeland, John Welch, Joseph Parke, William Copeland, Joseph Parker.

"This church consists of 32 members, it meets at Chowan."

This fixes the date of the date of the establishment of the first Free Will Baptist church in 1727 and the place in Chowan County, North Carolina. The location in Chowan County is well corroborated by a summary of the place of residence of the members. John Parker whose name heads the list, was probably the same John Parker who at that time was justice of the peace of Chowan County. Both John Jordan and John Parker were appointed "Appraisers of the Land" at Edenton in May, 1727. The names of John Parker, William Copeland, John Welch, John Brinkley, and Michael Brinkley are found on the Chowan jury lists of that period. Four of the signers of the letter were neighbors, living on adjoining farms, and more than half of the signers were connected by family ties.

From the foregoing, along with other available historical evidence, it is fairly certain that the first Free Will Baptist church established by Palmer was located near the present town of Cisco in the neighborhood of Fallard's Bridge Baptist Church.

Mr. Palmer was also instrumental in the organization of a church which exists today as Shiloh Baptist Church in Camden County, North Carolina. This church was set up as a Free Will Baptist church but later was taken over by the Missionary Baptists. The

original record lists Palmer and seven others as the petitioners for the recording of this organization which met for "religious worship in ye house of Wm. Burgess, on the north side of Pascquotank, on the head of Raymond's Creek . . ."

So far as we are able to determine, Palmer was not pastor of either of these early churches, but was the evangelist and organizer. Joseph Parker was pastor of the Chowan Church and William Burgess was the first pastor of the Pascquotank Church. From all the information available Palmer did not make it his business to pastor but seemed to be an evangelist, traveling extensively and gathering the people together wherever he went to preach to them. Comer's *Diary* again is our source and from it we glean the following:

December 1, 1729: On this date he notes that he wrote a letter to Mr. Palmer, "Minister at North Carolina." On the 14th of the same month he has an entry showing that he had received a letter from Palmer with a "small token of love." From this *Diary* we learn that in the fall of 1730 Mr. Palmer went to New England to visit some of the churches. After spending some time with the churches in Massachusetts he started the return to North Carolina intending to visit the churches in Newport, Rhode Island. However, a small-pox epidemic had imposed a quarantine and he could not go into Rhode Island.

He went from Rhode Island to New Jersey where he stopped with Rev. John Drake and assisted in the ordination of Henry Loveall, who was later discovered to be an escaped convict from Long Island. Back in North Carolina, Palmer established a church on New River in what is now Onslow County.

In the year 1730 or 1731 a great revival broke out among the Baptists in North Carolina and the leading spirit in the movement was Paul Palmer. In a few short months he had brought about a religious transformation which Governor Everard regarded as a wonder. He was holding daily meetings and getting converts (and proselytes) in every part of North Carolina. His converts numbered into the hundreds and Free Will Baptists were flourishing.

Palmer was an evangelist rather than a pastor, but as he went preaching he baptized those who were converted under his ministry. While Palmer did not hold to the idea of baptismal regeneration he considered willingness to be baptized a sufficient evidence of conversion. On this principle, Palmer soon had hundreds of followers in the province. Being widely scattered and having no pastors or teach-

ers, they had to depend on Palmer's rare visits for their religious instruction. Many of them fell by the way while very few of them made any appreciable progress in the Christian life.

It is highly probable that Palmer was instrumental in gathering congregations other than Chowan, Camden, and Onslow. Wherever the number of converts were sufficient and a local pastor could be secured, a church was organized. Among them was the church in New Bern, set up in 1740, in Beaufort on Bay and Neuse rivers in 1742, Swift Creek in Craven County, a church on Pungo in Beaufort County and a church at Mattamuskeet in Hyde County. While Palmer himself did not organize all these churches his immediate converts did, so in reality it was his influence that brought them into existence.

Historical records give no account of the length of Mr. Palmer's ministry. Burkitt and Read state that he was dead when Gano visited the state in 1754. In 1738 a paper was entered for Paul Palmer in Edenton as follows:

"North Carolina.

"Permission is hereby granted to Paul Palmer of Edenton, a Protestant minister to teach or preach the Word of God in any part of the said province (he having qualified himself as such) pursuant to an Act of Parliament made in the first year of King William and Queen Mary intituled an 'Act of Tolerating Protestant Dissenters.'

"Given under my hand at Edenton for the 4th day of October Anno Dom., 1738."

That Palmer preached under this license for ten or twelve years is pretty well established but the circumstances surrounding his death and the exact date have not been found. We can only surmise that his illustrious career was brought to an end by old age and the infirmities attending thereon. It seems evident that he left a substantial estate, having been well-blessed with earthly goods. But greater than those things was his record of accomplishments for the Lord Jesus Christ. He took a stand as an Anabaptist when such a position was highly unpopular and there he remained, regardless of the pressure brought to bear on him from many sources.

He planted the first Free Will Baptist churches as well as the first Missionary Baptist churches in North Carolina. His preaching provided a "light in a dark place" and led thousands to take Christ

as Savior. He attracted men from every walk of life with the thunder of his gospel and advised all alike to accept salvation.

In short, he was God's man in God's place at God's time. Our Free Will Baptist heritage is the richer for the leading role which he had in it and we are happy to acknowledge our gratitude to God for providing Paul Palmer with grace to preach free will, free grace, and free salvation.



## CHAPTER VIII

### HEROES OF THE FAITH

The Free Will Baptist movement in North Carolina led by Paul Palmer, although sparked by an intense desire on the part of the colonists for spiritual food, was not all that it could have been under different circumstances. History reveals at least three outstanding weaknesses which almost resulted in the premature death of the "Free Willers."

(1) There was not a sufficient number of local churches to take care of the many converts which Palmer and his associates made. Those who professed faith and were baptized were in many instances left to their devices insofar as perpetuating their Christian experience was concerned. Myriads of the converts were never taken into a church organization of any kind until the Particular Baptists came along and took them into their churches.

(2) So few in number were gospel preachers that services were conducted in the more remote sections only once or twice a year. This gave rise to carelessness brought on by the lack of teaching and led to worldliness and laxity in living and also made the converts easy prey of false doctrines. Many of the people could neither read nor write and could not fend for themselves in the way of grace. When the rare occasion came for them to hear a preacher, they came great distances afoot and in carts and wagons for the services. So eager were they to learn more about how to live right that they were willing to spend a week in laborious travel for one or two days of gospel preaching.

(3) Palmer and his Free Will Baptist contemporaries, while not actually preaching baptismal regeneration, nevertheless baptized rather profusely and in many instances left that impression. They were so governed by the ever-present shortage of preachers and the urgent necessity of getting as many people saved and baptized as possible, that they were too lenient in their demands for evidence of genuine salvation on the part of their converts. It seems that while they did not openly admit the unconverted to baptism, they did consider willingness to be baptized sufficient evidence of conversion.

The danger of such a position can readily be seen in that on such

grounds the grace of God in salvation was set aside for the initiatory measure of baptism before some of the baptized were actually saved.

It is more than likely, however, that the larger proportion of Palmer's converts were actually saved. But whether converted or unconverted, they were soon very numerous and also uncompromising adherents of Baptist principles. The fact that these Free Will Baptists were increasing so rapidly and were propounding so vigorously their Baptist faith brought on still another problem.

The Church of England had not been able to get a foothold in North Carolina due to its formality, coldness, and monarchical manner. Palmer's great successes had won for him the public praise of Governor Everard in 1729 and this served to further infuriate the bigoted Established Churchmen. Aroused by all this, they began to organize a resistance movement.

They tried to pass legislation imposing special taxes for the erection of churches in New Bern, Bath, Wilmington, Edenton, and Brunswick. As a further measure these churchmen, as justices of the courts, were refusing to grant Baptists the rights of the Toleration Act by keeping them from registering their churches as places of public worship. An appeal by the Free Will Baptists from one such ruling resulted in the imposition of severe fines and public whippings for the church leaders. However, an irate and aroused public, along with honest, God-fearing lawmen, soon put an end to such abuses and the Baptists were granted the right of having their meeting places registered and approved for public worship.

Palmer was always one to stay well within the bounds of prevailing law whenever possible to do so without compromising his doctrine or curtailing his ministry. In order to be fully protected against the maliciousness of the Established Churchmen, he registered in Perquimans county in 1738 for license as a dissenting preacher. A document found by Mr. J. R. B. Hathaway in the court house at Edenton bears out this fact:

"North Carolina

"Permission is hereby granted Paul Palmer, of Edenton, a Protestant minister to teach or preach the Word of God in any part of the Province (he having qualified himself as such) pursuant to an Act of Parliament made in the first year of King William and Queen Mary intituled an 'Act for Toleration Protestant Dissenters.'

"Given under my hand at Edenton for the 4th day of October Anno Dom., 1738."

(Not signed)

This paper is endorsed across the back, "To be registered for Paul Palmer."

Perhaps the leaders of the Church of England had cause to be alarmed, for the slow progress of their own church seemed all the slower in comparison to the almost phenomenal growth of the Free Will Baptist group. In a previous chapter it was pointed out that Palmer established churches in Chowan, Camden, and Onslow. In all probability he and his fellow-workers also organized churches in New Bern, Beaufort on Bay and Neuse rivers, Swift Creek in Craven county, Pungo in Beaufort county, and Mattamuskeet in Hyde county. While all of these churches cannot be credited personally to Palmer, they were all made up of his converts and constituted by preachers of the Free Will Baptist faith.

Rev. Alexander Bath, in a letter written in 1760, expresses the general feeling among Established Church leaders thus:

"Of late years this province is overrun with a people that at first called themselves Anabaptists, but having now refined upon that scheme, have run into so many errors and I may say almost bewitched the minds of the people that scarcely will they listen to anything that can be said in defense of the church we belong to."

As has been noted in foregoing statements, Paul Palmer was not alone in the great work which was going on in the Free Will Baptist revival. There were others as godly and fearless and dauntless as was he who were giving themselves unstintingly in the promulgation of the gospel message. Here we want to give brief biographies of some of the more outstanding ones among them.

### JOSEPH PARKER

From all accounts which we can find concerning his life and ministry, we are convinced that a more noble, self-sacrificing servant of God ever lived than Joseph Parker. Born in 1705 (?) the fourth child of Joseph Parker, Sr., he was brought up in a Christian home and early in life came to know the Free Will Baptist movement through the connection which his father, as one of its earliest leading laymen, had with it.

Of his early life we know very little, since no records have been found which bear directly on it. By 1729 the Meherrin and the Tuscarora Indians were confined to reservations on the Roanoke river, and although thus controlled, they remained more or less savage and resentful toward the whites, regarding them as intruders.

Few white settlers ventured into the immediate surroundings due to fear of Indian violence.

It was into this country that Joseph Parker and Sarah, his wife, came about 1730. Parker, at the age of 25, began his zealous evangelistic labors in this region, going near and far preaching the gospel. So numerous were these labors that some historians give him equal credit along with Palmer as one of the founders of the Free Will Baptist movement.

Among the churches which he established we have a well-founded record of one—the Meherrin church. In 1845, Wheeler, the historian of the Meherrin church which by then no longer held Free Will Baptist connections, wrote an article which sheds much light on the later years of Mr. Parker's life.

"The house was built of hewn logs and was 20 by 25 feet in size. His (Parker's) labors were confined principally to the people of this immediate vicinity until 1773, when he removed . . . south of Tar River . . . Elder Parker was a consistent Christian, a zealous and successful minister. While pastor of the church, he lived on the farm on which he first settled when removing from Camden . . . The land . . . for the church was given by Elder Parker . . . As the population increased Elder Parker again removed.

"His course was southward and he finally settled about 40 miles above New Bern, in a region of the country embraced in the present limits of Lenoir county. Here he and his wife lived in limited circumstances, supported by a few members of the Free Will Baptist Church. He preached occasionally on Conetoe Creek and also on Pungo River.

"In Dobbs county (since divided into Wayne, Lenoir, and Greene counties), Elder Parker was highly esteemed. It was to this county his labors were mostly confined, rarely preaching at any other place but at Wheat Swamp, near which church he settled. In the great reformation which took place among the Baptists of North Carolina, Elder Joseph Parker, William Parker, and Winfield refused to unite. As the reformed Baptists were styled Separates, the Parkers and their adherents assumed the title of Free Will Baptists.

"Joseph Parker departed this life about 1791 or '92 and was buried in Robert Wyrington's burial ground, on Wheat Swamp . . . Rev. Lewis Whitfield, an aged Baptist minister in Cartaret County, says that Elder Joseph Parker was a 'square-built man' with broad face, about five feet, eight inches high, and in his later years wore on



his head a cap continually. His manner of preaching was full of animation . . . No monument marks the spot where his ashes repose."<sup>1</sup>

Among the churches established by Joseph Parker were Bertie, later known as Sandy Run; Lower Fishing Creek, near Enfield; Little Contentnea, in present Greene County; Meherrin church; Swift Creek (a branch of Fishing Creek church), and perhaps Rocky Swamp.

Joseph Parker was a true and faithful servant of Jesus Christ. With a soul burning with missionary zeal he carried the gospel from frontier settlement to frontier settlement even to extreme old age. None was more untiring in his labors, more devoted to the cause, or more loyal to his convictions than Elder Joseph Parker.

#### WILLIAM SOJOURNER (SURGENOR)

Among the brighter lights of the Free Will Baptist movement, that of William Sojourner shone out as brightly as any of them. He was a native Virginian, having lived originally in Isle of Wight county. Just prior to his coming to North Carolina in 1742 a plague had swept his home county, leaving a terrible death toll behind. As a result, many of the survivors left Virginia to seek a more healthy climate.

In 1742, William Sojourner came to the section of North Carolina near the present site of Scotland Neck and organized the Kehukee church. They immediately built a church house and chose Sojourner as their pastor. The house was forty by twenty feet and in 1772 the church had 150 members.

While very little is known of his life, it is known that he was a man of wisdom and influence. During his short ministry he baptized several who afterwards became prominent ministers. The Kehukee church was regarded as the leading church of all west of the Roanoke and many other churches came out of her during the pastorate of Sojourner.

He had the care of Kehukee church for seven-and-a-half years until his death in February, 1749, or 1750 at the age of 43 years. His wife was Mary West, and his children were Jacob, Ann, and Tamar.

#### DR. JOSIAH HART

Among the men whom William Sojourner met and became most intimately associated with in Edgecombe province was Dr. Josiah Hart.

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<sup>1</sup> *History of North Carolina Baptists*, pp. 166-167, Paschall.

Of his early life we have nothing, but that he was a man of prominence is borne out by the records of his activity as a citizen and leader in the province. He was, in all probability, a convert of Sojourner's and was called into the gospel ministry under his pastorate. Whether this be the case or not, we do know that Dr. Hart became a fervent evangelist and rose high among leading churchmen of his day.

He made his headquarters in what is now Warren county, N.C., where he soon gathered a congregation and organized a church known as Fishing Creek or Reedy Creek. He inaugurated a program of evangelism which enlisted the services of many able ministers and resulted in adding many converts to the Baptist cause.

Dr. Hart baptized or ordained most of his fellow-workers. Among them were William Walker, who was pastor at Reedy Creek; Henry Ledbetter and James Smart; John Thomas, who became pastor at Roisnot; Charles Daniel, and he assisted Sojourner in the ordination of John Moore as pastor of the Falls of Tar church. He led this great assemblage of preachers to much success so that by 1755 there were sixteen Free Will Baptist churches in the province.

One of the great revivals conducted by Dr. Hart was at Reedy Creek where "great numbers came and were baptized." Many who thus came were from a great distance and when they returned to their homes they were out of touch with the mother church at Reedy Creek. Branch churches were set up at Benefield's Creek, 28 miles away; Sandy Creek, 17 miles away, and Giles Creek, 25 miles off.

Further information on the life and labors of Dr. Josiah Hart is difficult to arrive at. Suffice it to say, however, that his influence and leadership made it possible to get the gospel into many places where others would have hesitated to go.

## CHAPTER IX

### WHEN HELL ALMOST PREVAILED

In the foregoing chapters of the Free Will Baptist story we have traced the history of our denomination down through the various phases and periods of the times to the actual establishment of Free Will Baptist churches, as such, in the eighteenth century. Perhaps if our history had come to a close there, we would not be forced to include this chapter in the record. However, in the interest of correctness and honest presentation of facts, we must come now to the review of some of the first setbacks which the infant group suffered.

From the very outset, the message of free grace, free will, and free salvation struck discordant note in the ears of Particular Baptists. The doctrinal basis of their preaching was Calvinism, richly spiced with fatalism and predestination. The ministry of the Particular Baptist group was based on controversial ethics—they were not as much constructive in their preaching as they were destructive in their derision and contempt of the “free-will” message.

The ministers of the Particular Baptist movement were men of learning who had been trained for the task of defending the faith as they interpreted the word, and of spreading it everywhere by any and all means. They were zealous and able, and as we will soon see, ruthless in some instances.

The Particular Baptist movement was well organized and centralized. They had strategic centers located in the areas of densest population from which they operated a far-flung program of evangelization. Having strongly entrenched themselves in a given area, they would fan out in every direction and literally sow down those locales with their doctrine. Having more available ministers, they were able to man these outposts with settled pastors and give the people the full benefit of the church which they so desperately needed and for which they were looking. These men were well-grounded and rooted in their doctrines and were able through their ministry to persuade many people of other faiths to accept their creed and become a part of their church.

On the Free Will Baptist side the exact opposite was the case. By far the greater portion of their ministers were evangelists who went everywhere preaching. Very few of them ever actually settled in a

given locality and pastored a church. Then add to this the fact that many of the Free Will Baptist preachers were unlearned men who had never been trained for the ministry or taught in the Word, plus the fact that they were so very few in number when all of them were counted, and we can easily reach these conclusions:

(1) The Free Will Baptist ministry was unable to cope with the situation because it was undermanned and undertrained.

(2) The Free Will Baptist membership was left without regular pastors, thus they were not properly taught the necessary facts which make for strong churchmen.

(3) People thus neglected were apt to fall easy prey to any group that was prepared to give them these things which they were lacking.

Let it not be understood here that these Free Will Baptist ministers were disloyal to the cause or weak in their denominational love. Many of them wielded great and lasting influence in the lives of individuals and communities. The same is true of several of the laymen of the Free Will Baptist movement. But for this fact, the entire Free Will Baptist church would have been wiped out in the transformation years between 1750 and 1760. And it is to this transformation period that we must now turn our attention.

For the account of this transformation story I am indebted to G. W. Paschall in permitting the use of materials in his volume, *History of North Carolina Baptists*, chapter nine. The facts contained in this work are corroborated by Elder Hearn who in 1867 compiled a history of the Original Free Will Baptists of North Carolina.

The transformation of the Free Will Baptists to Particular Baptists took place between 1750 and 1775 and may be regarded as somewhat of a revolution. So thorough was the changeover that only four or five of the Free Will Baptist churches remained as such. In the area where the proselyting influence was first felt there were some sixteen or eighteen Free Will Baptist churches. The defection first began with the ministers and spread from them to the laity.

The first to fall was Rev. James Smart, the pastor at Fishing (Reedy) Creek. He first began to preach Calvinism in 1750 and though several of his members were sorely offended at this departure, they allowed him to stay on as pastor until 1755, when he went to South Carolina. In less than a year (1751) another Free Will Baptist preacher, Henry Ledbetter, saw reason to change his belief and become a Particular Baptist. The church of which he was



pastor, Tar River, asked him to leave and he, too, went to South Carolina. In 1752 William Walker left the Free Will Baptist faith for the Calvinists and went to Charleston, South Carolina, and spent a year there in preparation for work among the New Lights, as the Calvinistic Baptists were called. Upon returning, Walker took over the church at Fishing Creek which Ledbetter was leaving.

Perhaps the greatest influence which led these men and others to adopt the Particular Baptist views was the proselyting zeal of Rev. Robert Williams of Welsh Neck in South Carolina. In 1745 he had spent some time in Pee Dee where he was trained in the Calvinistic doctrines of the Welsh Neck Baptists. In 1750 he returned to his native home in Northampton county, North Carolina, and began to preach his Calvinistic views. Being a well-liked man and an excellent preacher he had great influence with the Free Will Baptists, especially those of the Kehukee Church.

In 1751 a man by the name of William Wallis, a sleigh-maker, was converted and after being instructed in Calvinism by Williams, became an ardent disciple of Calvinism, persuading men to accept his viewpoint. He was indirectly responsible for converting Rev. John Moore and Rev. Thomas Pope, pastor of Kehukee church.

Williams did not stop with this, but realizing that abler men were needed for the task at hand, he sent to the Philadelphia association for help. They sent Rev. John Gano, who came in 1754 on his first trip to North Carolina. Gano was one of the most outstanding ministers of his day and, as an itinerant, it is said he had no equal in America except George Whitefield. On this first trip he passed through North Carolina and went to Charleston, South Carolina, to attend an associational meeting. On his return he came by Tar River, attended a gathering of Free Will Baptists and in May, 1755, visited Fishing Creek. Here he had an interview with the Free Will Baptist ministers which is told by Morgan Edwards thus:

"On his arrival, he sent to the ministers, requesting an interview with them, which they declined, and appointed a meeting among themselves to consult what to do. Mr. Gano, hearing of it, went to their meeting and addressed them in words to this effect: 'I have desired a visit from you, which as a brother and a stranger, I had a right to expect; but as ye have refused, I give up my claim and am come to pay you a visit.' With this he ascended into the pulpit, and read for his text the following words, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?'

"This text he managed in such a manner as to make some afraid of him and others ashamed of their shyness. Many were convinced of their errors, . . . and submitted to an examination. One minister, hearing this, went to be examined, and intimated to his people he should return triumphant. Mr. Gano heard him out, and then turned to his companion and said, 'I profess, brother, this will not do: this man has yet the needful to seek.' Upon which the person examined hastened home, and upon being asked how he came off, replied, 'The Lord have mercy upon you, for this northern minister put a *mene tekel* upon me!'"

On his return to the Philadelphia association, Gano reported the need of the Free Will Baptists for help and the association sent two of its ablest men, Peter Peterson Van Horn and Benjamin Miller on the mission. These men left Philadelphia on Tuesday, October 28, 1755 and upon arriving in North Carolina visited the Kehukee Church. On December 11, 1755, the Kehukee Church was reorganized with only ten members, including the pastor and John Moore, who was probably the pastor at Tar River Falls. The turning of the Kehukee Church to the Particular Baptists seems to have given impetus to the other churches in the association in doing likewise for during the next five or six years nine more followed her in succumbing to the proselyting of Calvinists. The following table shows the churches and the dates of their going over to the New Lights:

## Fishing Creek

December 6, 1755 .....	13 members
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## Bear Creek, Lenoir County

1756 .....	15 members
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## Swift Creek, Craven County

February 7, 1756 .....	12 members
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## Lower Fishing Creek

October 13, 1756 .....	6 members
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## Pasquotank (Shiloh)

January 20, 1758 .....	12 members
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## Falls of Tar

December 3, 1757 .....	7 members
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## Toisnot

September 7, 1758 .....	14 members
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## Red Banks

November 20, 1758 .....	
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Great Cohara

October 15, 1759 ..... 12 members

Tar River

April 3, 1761 ..... 20 members

In the meantime Rev. Thomas Pope had crossed the Roanoke and organized a small church from the disorganized and pastorless members of Bertie, or Sandy Run, church.

It will be noticed how few members the churches retained when they were reorganized. For example, Pasquotank had two hundred or more members as a Free Will Baptist church and only twelve of them remained in the reorganized church. Likewise Fishing Creek and Falls of Tar churches, both of which had large memberships, show only a small minority taking membership with the new groups. Hardly more than five per cent of the Free Will Baptist membership went into the newly constituted Particular Baptist churches.

The question arises, why did so few of the Free Will Baptist members have no part in the new movement? The answer lies in the fact that the preachers who were first induced to capitulate were not followed by their members as they had expected to be. The lay members were much more conservative than the preachers and even the small numbers necessary to form the new organizations were gained only after much labor and persuasion.

In some instances these lay-members showed open hostility to those who were taking away the old organization and putting the new in its place. For many years the two factions waged doctrinal controversy with great bitterness and other than this, had no dealings with one another. The two factions in the Toisnot Church each claimed the meeting house, and the pastor, John Thomas, "forcefully closed the doors of the church to the Baptist Society," that is, the Free Will Baptists. The latter brought the matter into the courts in 1759 but it was never brought to trial.

It is interesting to note the method of reorganization used by the Particular Baptists when taking over a Free Will Baptist church. The first act was to disband the organization which had previously existed. Then all who desired to become a part of the new organization were required to stand an examination which was conducted by approved Particular Baptist ministers who were present for that purpose. The examination was given to determine whether the individual had been converted before his baptism, and also to have him relate his religious experience at conversion. Many of the Par-

ticular Baptist ministers were extremely rigid and severe in this examination, making it impossible for some of the applicants to qualify.

While many of the Free Will Baptist ministers soon joined in the so-called reformation, at least three remained faithful to the end. They were Elders Joseph Parker, William Parker, and John Winfield. All of them had labored in the church at Meherrin, Joseph Parker being its first pastor and William Parker his assistant. The Meherrin Church continued as Free Will Baptist until the death of William Parker, in 1794, when it became a Particular Baptist Church.

Meherrin was not the only Free Will Baptist church to survive the reformation. We have definite record of at least three others which came through the trials and are still "true to the faith of Free Will Baptists today." Gum Swamp church, in Pitt County, withstood the shocks of proselyting and remains today as a bulwark of the faith. Another is Little Creek church, in Greene County. This church had been quite severely divided at one time over the matter of going over to the Calvinists. The pastor and a large number of its members turned from the old paths, but a few remained firm and saved the church from going over completely.

The church at Wheat Swamp remained Free Will Baptist for several years but finally died for lack of a pastor. There were some of the old members remaining at Wheat Swamp as late as 1867 but the old building and its furnishings were destroyed during the Civil War. A Disciples of Christ church now stands on the site of the Wheat Swamp Free Will Baptist church.

After the breaking up of the churches by the Particular, or New Light Baptists, the churches which remained began a recovery program. Soon the new Free Will Baptist organizations spread over fifteen eastern North Carolina counties, reporting a total of 2,000 members and forty ministers. They enjoyed peace and prosperity until the conference became large and it was thought best to have another conference. This new one was called Bethel Conference of Free Will Baptists.

However, another near-tragedy struck about this time, when in 1839 Elder J. T. Latham and a few other Free Will Baptist ministers embraced the views of Alexander Campbell and withdrew from the denomination. Bethel Conference was the most vitally affected due to the proselyting influence of Latham and others.

In 1839 Free Will Baptist membership was listed as 2,006, with



thirty-two ministers. After the Campbellite secession, in 1843 the membership stood at 1,400, with twenty-two preachers. However, recovery was rapid and in four years there were 2,563 members and fifty-eight ministers.

The new prosperity was short-lived and in the next chapter we shall point out the third serious schism in the Free Will Baptist ranks.

## CHAPTER X

### DIVIDED, UNITED, PROSPERING

The statement, "God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform," has never been more applicable to any situation than it was to the Free Will Baptist movement in the early days. Had it not been for the hand of God on the work of Free Will Baptists, they would have been completely overwhelmed. Perhaps no group has ever undergone such trying circumstances or been put to such severe tests. On every hand the enemy approached with malicious intent and even from within the ranks the destroyer appeared, bent on internal destruction. To make matters more serious, all these problems and trials arose during the years when Free Will Baptists were striving to overcome the proselyting influence of the Particular Baptists. However, through it all the Lord undergirded His people and the Free Will Baptist cause remained intact.

In the preceding chapter, the fact of the Campbellite intervention was mentioned briefly. The details of this experience will serve to point out some of the terrific pressure which was exerted against Free Will Baptists.

Soon after the breaking up of the Free Will Baptist churches by the Particular Baptists, the remnant came together again and soon began to organize new churches. It was not long until there were organizations spread over fifteen counties in eastern North Carolina with more than 2,000 members and 40 preachers. They enjoyed an unprecedented era of peace and prosperity. Many revivals were reported in various places and the name of Free Will Baptists again came to be known. Several new and able ministers were raised up and the churches grew mightily under their leadership.

The growth of the denomination in this region occasioned the dividing of the conference, the new one being known as Bethel Conference of Free Will Baptists. The new conference immediately began a program of outreach designed to reach other localities and organize new churches. Everyone was enthusiastic about the Bethel Conference and all indications pointed to a wonderful future for the cause.

All went well with Bethel Conference until sometime in 1829 or 1830. For a year or two prior to this date the disciples of Alexander

Campbell had been trying to make inroads into the Free Will Baptist churches but were having little success. These people (the Campbellites) styled themselves at that time as Christian Baptists and some of their practices and doctrines were the same. For an accurate record of what actually happened, I quote the following from *History of the Free Will Baptists of North Carolina*, by Harrison and Barfield:

“The Campbellites, or Christian Baptists as they called themselves, appeared in North Carolina in 1829, and like our Primitive brethren, set to work to proselyte our little flock. Their plea for union; their aims and heart’s desire were for division. They would preach on the office-work of the Holy Spirit as strong as any Free Will Baptist, and pretend to believe it until they had kidnapped several of our preachers and scores of our members. As soon as this was done they changed their name to “Disciples” and bitterly opposed the office-work of the Holy Spirit. At this time they practiced feet-washing as a church ordinance in connection with communion. In a few years they ceased to practice it, and changed their name to “Christian.” Amid all this turning and twisting they did not cease to proselyte the Free Will Baptists. Like the plagues of Egypt they destroyed the peace and happiness of the humble children of God.”

The proselyting ministry of the Campbellites continued until 1843, at which time it came to a head at the Free Will Baptist conference in November of 1843. In the three years between 1832-35 the Bethel conference was practically annihilated. They got so bold “in their proselyting work that Eld. Josephas J. Latham, who left us (the Free Will Baptists), tried to organize a Campbellite church in Piney Grove, Pitt County, North Carolina, and when our brethren forbade it, he pulled out enough weak-kneed members from that church to organize what is now called Red Oak, Pitt County, North Carolina. Bro. Latham was not satisfied with this, for he even tried to secure the land to build a church in a few yards of Piney Grove, Pitt County, North Carolina.”

At this point, let us retrace our steps to the conference which met in 1831. For the historical account let us look again at Harrison and Barfield’s *History of North Carolina Free Will Baptists*.

“The Bethel Annual Conference in 1831 was held at Probability church, Duplin County, North Carolina on the 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th of November. Elder Jesse Heath introduced the services and delivered the introductory sermon from Judges 19:30. After which the conference organized by the appointment of Elder James Moore, moderator, and Thomas Hood, clerk.

“On motion, Emanuel Jarmon and John H. Dixon were appointed

a committee of finance to receive contributions, settle with the treasurer, and report to conference.

"Elders Hays and Utley, messengers from the Christian Baptist Conference held at Pleasant Springs church, Wake County, North Carolina attended this Conference, were received with great joy.

"On motion by Elder Redding Moore, the Free Will Baptist churches in South Carolina, in connection with himself, be dismissed and authorized to organize an annual conference in their own section of the country."

While this is the first mention of South Carolina in the Free Will Baptist story, it is a fact that there were several such churches organized and established in that section during the late 1700's and the early 1800's. Many of the Free Will Baptist preachers who were laboring in North Carolina crossed over into South Carolina and extended their evangelistic efforts there.

The South Carolina conference was organized soon after the November, 1831, meeting of Bethel Conference for the record shows that in 1832 at the conference held at Louson Swamp, Lenoir County, North Carolina a letter was read from the South Carolina conference. Elder J. W. Vause was appointed by Bethel Conference "to write a letter of correspondence to the brethren in South Carolina, informing them of the proceedings of this conference, etc."

Another incident of interest and importance took place in the 1832 meeting of the conference. A letter was presented to the conference from an Elder Jesse Lane, of Indiana. Elder Lane was a leader of the General Baptists of Kentucky and Indiana. The purpose of his letter was to ask for the privilege of representing to the Bethel Free Will Baptist conference from the General Baptists and to request the Free Will Baptists to send representatives to the General Baptist meetings. The record from the minutes of that conference on this matter read, "Resolved, that the General Baptist Association in Indiana and Kentucky, of which Elder Lane is a member, have liberty to represent itself at our next annual Conference." Thus it would seem that even in those days, the leaders of the two groups realized that there was very much in common between them and that a merging of their mutual interests could very well work to the advantage of all concerned. This fraternal fellowship was continued for a number of years as is shown by repeated references to visiting brethren and corresponding delegates from each group to the other. It is perhaps for this reason that Free Will



Baptists did not establish any early work in Indiana and Kentucky and the General Baptists did not expand into North Carolina. Not desiring to conflict with each other in what would have been a repetitious ministry, both groups simply expanded in the areas where they were rather than infringe on the other.

In the conference meeting at Hood's Swamp, Wayne County, North Carolina in 1847 another ugly monster reared its head. This time, however, it was not in the form of denominational proselyters. For an accurate account I am going to quote again from Harrison and Barfield.

"During this year many of our brethren had joined the Free-Masons.

"Some of the oldest preachers considered this a great sin, for they said, 'Christ did nothing in secret.' So they passed a resolution in which they declared themselves separate from all the societies of the day; . . . This resolution caused much disturbance. After many warm speeches were made both pro and con, the conference passed a resolution deciding it a conference without Free-Masonry, upon which the brethren who were in favor of it withdrew from the conference.

"On motion, they invited all the ministers and lay members who were favorable to this resolution to meet them in their next conference."

This settled the matter until 1850 when the conference met at Wheat Swamp, in Lenoir County. Quoting again from the record, we find Eld. Calvin Ruff proposed that the resolution adopted at Hood's Swamp in relation to Free-Masonry be expunged. Eld. Jesse Vause proposed that each individual church belonging to the Free Will Baptist conference "hold its own key within its own power and transact its own business without General Conference having any control over it . . ."

In the meantime, Free-Masons and the Odd-Fellows continued to draw members from the churches. Some of the best Free Will Baptist ministers had united with these orders. Outstanding among the ministers who opposed secret orders was Elder James Moore and he was the particular target of the supporters of secret orders.

The showdown finally came in 1853 when the conference met at Free Union Church, in Martin County. "At this Conference was the trying scene to those who were friendly to old Free Will Baptist

principles. It was here that the battle was fought that brought peace and harmony that has since prevailed.

"Immediately after the conference was duly organized, Elder Alfred Moore introduced a resolution, the purport of which was that no church belonging to the conference shall be at liberty to reject any person applying for membership, or excommunicate any member on the grounds that he belongs to the order of Free-Masons or Odd-Fellows or Sons of Temperance.

"Elder James Moore introduces a resolution giving to each church its own key—the privilege of transacting its own business. The moderator, H. G. Paul, refused to put this resolution to a vote, whereon Elder James Moore put this resolution before the House and received 60 votes. Elder Moore's resolution received 36.

"At this stage of the proceedings there was great confusion such as we hope never to see again among Christian people.

"On Friday, conference met again, and it being found impossible to harmonize or unite upon the resolutions, . . . the conference divided.

"Each party reorganized and the old Free Will Baptists fell back on their discipline and sought the old paths and found peace."

The other party united with another group directed by a Mr. Honnicut and later came to be known as Union Baptists. Over the years the Union Baptist connection has become weakened and some years ago a remnant of them moved westward into Oklahoma and Kansas. In October of 1954 the Union Baptists of Oklahoma united with the Oklahoma State Association of Free Will Baptists and it is hoped that the Kansas group will soon see its way free to also unite with the Free Will Baptist movement.

In the next chapter of the Free Will Baptist story we are going to take up the movement in the north under the leadership of Rev. Benjamin Randall. Before closing this phase of the story, let us take a quick look at the development of the Free Will Baptist movement in the south.

In the year 1816 Elder Redding Moore moved from North Carolina to South Carolina and took up residence there. He was a member of Grimsley church, Greene County, N. C. For eleven years there was no Free Will Baptist church in South Carolina. In 1827, Elder Moore's years of faithful service paid off, in that he was able to organize three churches. They were Mother Church in Clarendon County, Little Sister and Piney Grove, in Williamsburg County.

These three churches were organized into a Yearly Meeting in 1828. The contemporaries of Elder Moore in this work were Elders John and Wright Wilson, Samuel Moore, Moab Hewitt, and Nathan Hall.

The group prospered and increased with no trouble or strife until 1878, at which time Elders B. W. Nash and R. F. Gause tried to get the conference to join the Southern Baptist Convention. The move was defeated, but a few dissenting churches withdrew and joined the Southern Baptists.

In 1885 and '86 another proposal of merger left its scar. This time, Elders J. E. Cox and C. B. Peckham of the northern Free Will Baptists and H. H. Prater of the South Carolina conference tried to get the group to join the northern Free Will Baptist Conference. The South Carolina group was opposed to the move because the two groups were not agreed on the church ordinances. (The northern group did not include feet-washing as an ordinance.) When the proposal was defeated, a few of the churches withdrew and went off, but soon died out.

The Free Will Baptist work also spread into Georgia, where a church was organized in Chattahoochee. In Florida, Elder R. R. Hayles organized the first Free Will Baptist Church in that state in Marion County. Free Will Baptist work had been started in Texas by Elder J. T. Eason. One of the earliest and most widely known Free Will Baptist preachers of Texas was Elder Charles Stetson, better known as the "cowboy" preacher. He published a paper known as the "Free Will Baptist Banner."

## CHAPTER XI

### BEGINNINGS IN THE NORTHEAST

Thus far the Free Will Baptist story has been concerned with the earliest beginnings of the denomination in North Carolina and the south. This was necessary both from a chronologic and historic standpoint. We come now to the expansion of the Free Will Baptist movement and for the next few chapters will review its fortunes in New England and the northeast.

In order to get a correct understanding of our denominational history, it must be borne in mind that the movement in the north was not necessarily an outgrowth of the original Free Will Baptist movement under Palmer in North Carolina. It seems from all accounts that the Randallian organization came as a natural defense against the prevailing evils of the day in that particular part of the country and did not depend on the older Free Will Baptist group either for advice or assistance.

While it is true that the two groups later enjoyed mutual fellowship and fraternal interchanges, they were never actually considered as one and the same. Many of the Free Will Baptist churches in the south consistently refused to unite with their northern brethren in any official organization.

The beginnings in the north were very similar to those of the south, inasmuch as prevailing circumstances were much the same. The first and primary cause of the Free Will Baptist church in the north was the prevailing intolerance of the day.

The early New England settlers were Puritans of the purest class. In exiling themselves on our uninviting shores, they never intended that their settlement should provide an asylum for all. They regarded it as both their right and duty to protect their children from all errors. In carrying out this right and duty, they fell into two grievous errors—(1) the supposed necessity of uniformity in public worship, and (2) the connection of church and state.

The first forbade religious toleration; the latter led to the defense and support of religion by legal means. The Cambridge Platform was adopted in 1648 as agreed upon by the elders and messengers of the church and General Court and it became the ecclesiastical constitution. In part it provided that, "men who publicly called in



question the authority of the magistrate in things of religion, who opposed infant sprinkling, or petitioned for civil and religious privileges, were to be fined, imprisoned, or banished.”<sup>1</sup>

While Calvinistic Baptists were doing a great work toward correcting this intolerance, men were needed and wanted whose free doctrines and liberal spirit would set the great love of God and the free principles of the gospel in vivid contrast with the narrow policy of sectarian men. The zealous efforts of Free Will Baptist men were destined to provide this much needed impetus.

The second great evil of the day was the ministry. While the first ministers of New England were pious men “mighty and abundant in prayer,” they were also learned men. A classical education was considered of such importance that candidates for ordination were examined in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages and some were rejected because they were unable to meet the test.

So much emphasis was placed upon education, and so stringent were the demands that the minister be a learned man, that soon such things as piety, humility, and Christianity were forgotten. Many men who had a good education were induced to enter the ministry, although openly professing that they held to no particular religious views. The salary, learning, and commanding influence of the ministry led many to take it up as a profession. The consequence was a strong tendency to conform to worldliness and cold formality.

George Whitefield, while traveling in New England, made this observation: “The reason why congregations have been so dead is because they have dead men preaching to them . . . It is true indeed that God may convert people by the devil, if he pleases, and so He may by unconverted ministers. But I believe that He seldom makes use of either of them for this purpose.”

To meet and correct this evil was another part of the Free Will Baptist mission. Never did men insist more determinedly on any point than did the denomination on the unquestioned piety and high spiritual attainment of its ministry. Other qualifications might be wanting, but this, never!

Among other evils of the day was that of coercion. The fact that the Puritans depended upon political and civil action for the support of religion laid the groundwork for ugly viciousness in this respect. They (the Puritans) regarded the preached gospel as a public good, and held that inasmuch as everyone was in some measure

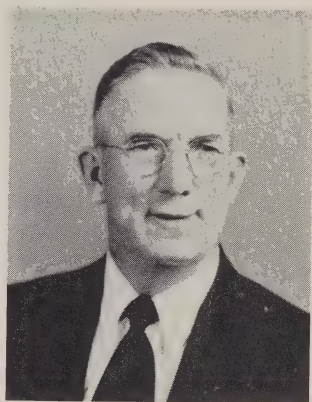
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<sup>1</sup>*History of Free Will Baptists*, Volume 1, by I. D. Stewart.

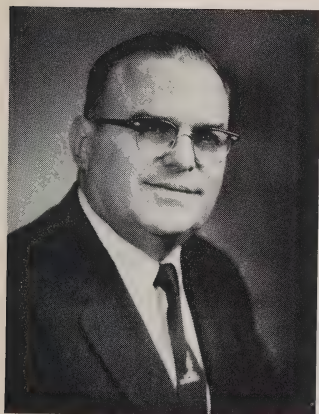
# Moderators of the National Association



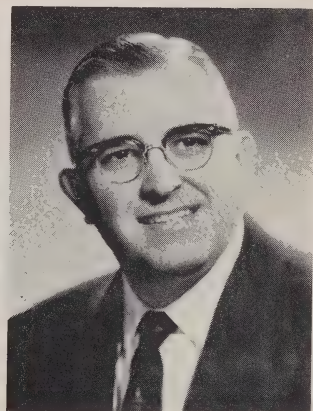
JOHN L. WELCH  
1935-37



JAMES F. MILLER  
1938-43



J. R. DAVIDSON  
1944-45



L. C. JOHNSON  
1946-48

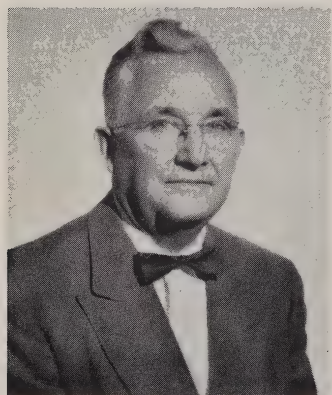
# Moderators of the National Association



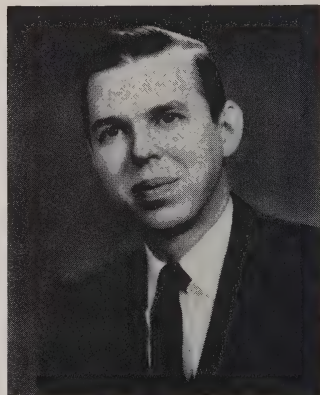
FLOYD B. CHERRY  
1949



N. BRUCE BARROW  
1950-51



EDWARD E. MORRIS  
1952-54



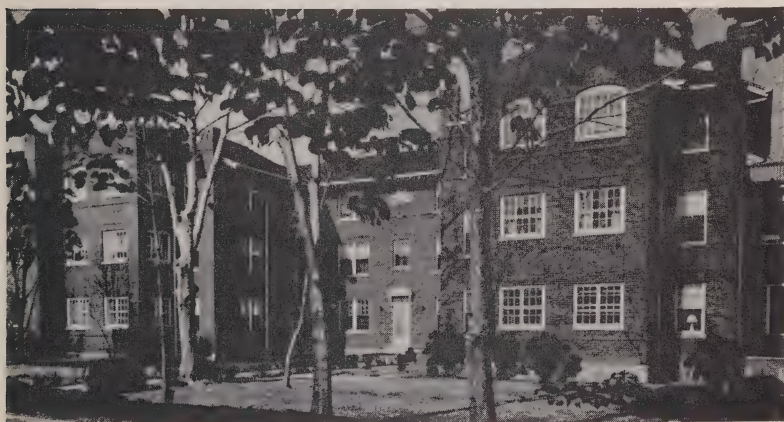
CHARLES A. THIGPEN  
1955-



# Free Will Baptist Bible College



DAVIDSON HALL, in which the Free Will Baptist Bible College opened its first term in 1942.



RICHLAND HALL, purchased in 1952.





MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM, constructed in 1950.



DR. L. C. JOHNSON, *President*  
1942-44, 1947-

benefited thereby, he ought to be forced to support the church as it preached.

The Cambridge Platform taught, "that not only members of churches, but all who are taught in the word, are to contribute unto him that teacheth in all good things; and that the magistrate is to see that the ministry be duly provided for." Laws were passed requiring every town to support a minister, "the burden to be laid on the whole society jointly, whether in church order or not."

"The recognized method of settling a minister was for the church to give him a call and then a town, at a legal meeting, would concur in the invitation and vote the required salary. If there was no church to take the lead in this action, the town proceeded with the initiative. Towns not only voted the salary, which was assessed and collected the same as other taxes, but on 'settling' a man, a 'settlement' was voted much larger in amount than the annual salary, that he might provide himself a home among his people."<sup>2</sup>

Men who were thus compelled to support ministers whom they never heard and build meeting houses which they never entered, became prejudiced against religion itself. The tide of popular indignation at last came to run so high that by the beginning of the nineteenth century all were exempt from further taxation at their express request.

The Free Will Baptist movement was strictly opposed to this "hireling" ministry from the very first. So pernicious in its effect was the whole system of religious coercion, that they felt themselves compelled for the time to stand upon the extreme ground of contributions given privately and voluntarily. This led to their being reproached as opposed to salaried ministers and the effects were felt seriously for some time. However, this specter disappeared in a few years and the Free Will Baptist denomination produced some of the country's leading ministers.

Two major doctrines of the day which were throttling the spiritual growth of the church were hyper-Calvinism and infant baptism. People were faithfully indoctrinated in the tenets of personal, unconditional election and reprobation, the absolute perseverance of the saints, and "that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass." One contemporary historian asserted that "the whole body of New England clergy are Calvinists. In two hundred churches, not one is Arminian."

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 9-20.

The doctrine of infant baptism was also widespread and was opposed vigorously by the Baptist groups, especially the Free Will Baptists. The Free Will Baptist movement also provided much opposition to the rank Calvinism and predestination of the day.

One of the most threatening of all evils was the impiety which possessed many church members. This was brought on by the fact that inasmuch as men were required to pay taxes to support the church they demanded the full benefits of the church without repentance. This brought about a meeting called by the General court in Boston in 1662 in which was formulated a so-called "half-way" covenant. It provided that "all baptized persons are members of the church, and their children are entitled to baptism." It also allowed for "receiving into church membership all persons sprinkled in infancy," and "not scandalous in life, though not professedly pious." It can readily be seen how the "half-way" covenant greatly lowered the standard of piety, loosely held the reigns of discipline, and developed a "liberal" policy which ripened into Unitarianism.

Coupled with all these evils were the doubtful issues of the Revolution which was pending at that time. Onto the stage as deliverers came men, called of God, who were destined to set in order the Free Will Baptist movement and provide the people with the truth as it was in God's Word. As we follow the chain of events in the history of our church in the north we will see how singularly used of God were these men.

The new Free Will Baptist movement in the north did not introduce a new religion. It only labored to reconstruct the apostolic platform; and standing upon it, their success was the apostolic spirit revived. This is shown in the following, which sets forth the original positions of the Free Will Baptists:

(1) The Bible is given by inspiration of God and is the only rule of faith and practice.

(2) The Divine Trinity composed of God, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; of infinite attributes and righteous providences.

(3) "Christ is all, and in all, to us." He is the author of salvation, and the all-prevailing name with God; He is hope of glory and through Him all things were possible.

Free Will Baptists also believed that Christ died for all, and that the atonement was general.

They believed in the Holy Scriptures as a guide to all truth, a help in all infirmities, and an everlasting comfort to the soul.



Their own strength was weakness, their wisdom folly, and their righteousness as filthy rags. But when divinely impressed with a sense of duty and endowed with power from on high, they "conferred not with flesh and blood". Their belief in the necessity of the Spirit's aid has seldom been equalled.

"They believed in the foreknowledge of God but denied that it necessitated the acts of men. Both the invitations and threatenings of the Gospel, its warnings and admonitions, imply free moral agency, and they impressed upon dying sinners the words of the Savior, 'Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.' Such are the motives to piety and the freedom of choice, that the persistent sinner was assured that he would stand self-condemned, eternally reiterating the sentence, 'thou has destroyed thyself'. So important was their estimate of this sentiment 'free will' that it was reproachfully forced on them as part of their name."<sup>3</sup>

The Free Will Baptist Church set forth, in addition to the above, these articles of faith:

1) Perseverance of the saints, like the salvation of sinners, was conditional.

2) A Divine call to the ministry.

3) "The workman is worthy of his meat."

4) The chief prerequisite to church membership was that one be born again. They believed in growth in grace and progress in Christian experience.

5) In worship, little reliance was placed on outward form, but everything depended on the spirit within.

6) Repentance, faith, baptism, church membership, and communion, was the order of obedience.

7) No one could be an obedient follower of Christ unless he were "buried with him in baptism".

8) In the matter of communion, the Christ-like sentiment of the heart, as well as the kind invitation from the mouth, was to everyone who could discern the Lord's body, "Come with us."

Thus did the early Free Will Baptists cut loose from the traditions of the church and the doctrines of men and stood on the Word of God. They believed what it taught and practiced what it required. In so doing they were prepared to meet the demands of the times and great was the blessings of their labors. Sinners were converted, spiritual worship revived, and primitive Christianity restored.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 27-28.



## CHAPTER XII

### GOD'S MAN FOR GOD'S HOUR

In every crisis God has always had a man for the time. Such men were Moses and Joshua, Gideon and Samuel, Jeremiah and Isaiah, and countless others who have served in times of special need. Such men must be at the same time visionaries and visioners, conformists and pioneers, heroes and fools.

Benjamin Randall, God's man for God's hour, measured up in every respect, and as such was used mightily of Him in establishing the Free Will Baptist church in the northeast.

It was in the township of New Castle, situated on an island in the entrance of Portsmouth Harbor, New Hampshire, where Benjamin Randall was born on February 7, 1741. He was the eldest son of Captain and Mrs. Benjamin Randall.

Of the earlier years of his life we know very little only that he was the subject of strong religious impressions and seems to have been an unusual child in this respect. At the age of nine he went to sea with his father and this was his occupation "off and on" until he was eighteen. During these years young Benjamin became so disgusted with the profanity and reckless abandon of the sailors that he got a different job. He was apprenticed to a sailmaker in Portsmouth, where he remained until he was twenty-one years old. It is said that during this time he never neglected his seasons of fasting and prayer or attending services on the Lord's Day. He sometimes engaged in dancing and similar recreations but was later to come into severe condemnation over this.

Educational facilities were very limited in Mr. Randall's day and his earliest experiences in the "common" schools were somewhat niggardly. Dartmouth College had just come into existence but was designated "for the education of Indians and such as purposed to be missionaries among them." Benjamin was able to secure a good "mercantile" education by taking advantage of the opportunities at hand.

At the age of twenty-one Mr. Randall returned to New Castle. This was in the year 1770, the same year that the famous preacher, George Whitefield, made his last visit to America. Randall was among those who opposed Whitefield and his message, but like many

others, was drawn inexorably into the services. In speaking of the preacher afterwards, he said, "The power with which he spoke was a torment to me."

In spite of this, Randall grew harder and more bitter against the truths of Mr. Whitefield's messages. It was on a Friday night that he last heard Mr. Whitefield. The following Sunday he went to Portsmouth to attend services. At noon a stranger came riding slowly down the streets with the solemn news of Whitefield's death. This announcement pierced the heart of Randall. Writing of this experience later, Mr. Randall said, "a voice sounded through my soul, more loud and startling than ever thunder pealed upon my ears. Whitefield is dead!"

He went on to say, "Whitefield is now in heaven and I am on the road to hell. He was a man of God, yet I reviled him and spoke reproachfully of him. He taught me the way to heaven, but I regarded it not. O that I could hear his voice once again. But ah, never, no never shall I hear it again, till, in the judgment of the great day, it will be swift witness against me."

It must be remembered that Mr. Randall was a member of the Congregational Church and was, for all practical purposes, a good member. But it is evident that he had never been born again, for upon returning home from Portsmouth he locked himself in his room and gave up to thinking about his lost estate. His former religion in which he had so implicitly trusted now seemed entirely worthless.

The tempter would say to him, "Dismiss all these fears and let your good deeds which you have done be the satisfaction of your soul." One day as he was musing on his unhappy state, he came across the Scripture in Hebrews 9:26, "But now, once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He immediately grasped on the hope that Christ had appeared to put away his sins. "This," said he, "is my only hope. I will trust him right now." And suddenly all was calm and peaceful. Listen to Mr. Randall as he gives his reaction to this experience of grace:

"Previous to the discovery of my guilt I was in love with the world and its vanities. They are now loathsome to me, and I know that I love God and long after righteousness. What, then, is this, but a change in my heart, wrought by the power of God? This is conversion, this is what is meant in the scriptures by being 'born again.' As soon as I believed this I gave glory to God . . . O, the lovely character of Jesus; he is my transport and my trust. His

precious name was all that I could repeat. It seemed to me that if I had ten thousand souls, I could trust them all with Jesus." The time of Mr. Randall's conversion was October 15, 1770.

In 1771, November 28, he was married to Joanna Oram and they lived in New Castle, where Randall had gone into business as a sail-maker. The family altar was set up in their home and they united with the Congregational Church a year later. However, the immoralities which he found in the church so grieved and vexed his soul that he was forced to try to find something better.

Having revealed his convictions to a few of the most devoted in the church, they agreed together to hold meetings on the Sabbath and Thursday evenings for "singing, prayer, and the reading of a sermon, or some other good book." The report soon got out that Randall wanted to be a preacher and his pastor took this fact, along with Mr. Randall's occasional visits to other congregational meetings to mean that he was dissatisfied, whereupon fellowship between the two practically ceased.

In March, 1775, Mr. Randall attended a special service in the "Separate" meeting house in Portsmouth at which an Englishman was speaking and it so happened that the sermon text was Hebrews 9:26, the one that had given so much hope and light to him. The sermon was both practical and Biblical and at the close of the service Randall went to the pulpit stairs to shake the minister's hand and congratulate him, intending to tell him a little of his own experience with this text.

However, he became so happy in his rememberings and spoke so freely and audibly that all in the house understood him distinctly. He invited the Englishman to come to New Castle and preach in his church, to which the man consented. When Mr. Randall took the good news to his pastor he was met with a positive refusal in regards to using the meeting house for the service. When the day of the meeting arrived and minister and people came together, the town officers opened the house and the service progressed.

Now another problem presented itself. The day of communion was approaching and Randall did not know what to do. The alienation between him and the pastor had grown so intense, and the church generally sympathized with the pastor, Randall supposed that the emblems would be refused him, and if so, he would have to insist on a trial. But when the day came, no hindrance was presented, so he examined himself and partook with the others.



His only alternative now was to stay away from the meetings and refuse the ordinances and await the action of the church. A few of the others did the same, and continuing their meetings by themselves, they soon became the subjects of reproach. The vitality of the church was so far gone that no action was ever taken, and for twenty-five years there was not a single addition to the church. By 1821 it was reduced to one member—a widow. Thus ended Mr. Randall's connection with the Congregational Church.

One day while walking alone, he began thinking about the lost condition of poor sinners. He was wondering who there was to really warn them to turn from sin, when a voice seemed to say, "Why don't you warn them?" So frightened and rebellious was he at such suggestions that he ran from the Lord. He joined the army and held the rank of orderly sergeant in Colonel Mooney's regiment.

A son of Colonel Mooney, who was his father's waiter at that time, has this to say of Randall's army life. "I had a very high regard of Mr. Randall, both as a man and a Christian. Whenever he heard that a soldier was sick he sought the first opportunity to visit him and pray with him . . ." He fought in the battle of Bunker Hill and also saw action in some of the other important contests in the Revolutionary War.

Another crisis came into Randall's life at the birth of their third child. For quite some time he had been in doubt on the matter of infant baptism, and now before having the child baptized he was determined to satisfy himself as to the teaching of the Bible on this matter. While he was in indecision on the matter, his wife had the child sprinkled. This spurred Randall on to a more fervent search of the Word and the result was that he was perfectly satisfied in his own mind that immersion, and the immersion of believers only, was the baptism of the Bible.

Such conviction meant, of course, that Randall himself had not been properly baptized so he went to confer with his confidential friend, Mr. Trefethren, on the subject. In the meantime, Mr. Trefethren had also been studying the matter, and having reached the same conclusion, started to Mr. Randall's house to confer with him on the matter and thus they met each other, bent on the same errand.

They recognized that the Lord had been leading in the matter, but were more amazed when, upon presenting to their brethren, they learned that they, too, had been led by the Spirit and were of the same mind. Soon after, William Hooper was ordained at Berwick,



Maine, as a Baptist minister, and at the close of the service, he baptized Randall and three others, who united with the church in Berwick.

One other question remained now to plague Randall and that was concerning the ministry. The struggle was long and obstinate and at times Mr. Randall felt so unworthy and incompetent to be called to preach that he prayed God to take him out of the world rather than to call him to preach the Gospel. The more he prayed, the more insistent became the call. At last, in a meeting with his group, the surrender came.

He took a volume of Dr. Watt's sermons and stood up to read. "As I read," he said, "I began to die; and the more I read the more I felt my life departing, till I dared not read another line, lest the Lord should leave me to hardness of heart and blindness of mind." He threw down the book, confessed his convictions of duty to preach, and his disobedience, and said, "Now, by the grace of God, I am resolved to be obedient, and give myself up to his service as long as I live."

The next day he wrote a covenant with the Lord, in which he laid himself and his all on the altar for service or sacrifice, as it might please God. After this consecration he received a renewal of his commission and a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. His former timidity about preaching now entirely left him. Instead of centering his thoughts upon his own incapacity, he was enabled more fully to realize God's exhaustless resources, and to grasp more firmly his promises of support.

In April, 1777, Mr. Randall gave his first sermon, using as a text, Revelation 3:12, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out."

Opposition to Randall's ministry was not long in rearing its ugly head. A revival in New Castle in the spring of 1777 resulted in thirty conversions but much profane and evil talk against Randall arose because of his opposition to Calvinism. A brick thrown at him grazed his hair as it passed. A group gathered with tar and feathers at an appointed place where Randall was supposed to pass, but upon being informed that he had gone another way, put the tar and feathers on a nearby fence post.

He was later invited to preach in Kittery, Maine, and again a mob was organized against him. When some of his friends informed him of the plot, he said, "Ah! that is the Devil's old regiment; he

once raised forty men to kill Brother Paul, but he missed it, and I believe he will be disappointed now. God calls and I must go." He passed the tavern where the mob was waiting but not a move was made.

No sooner had he started preaching, however, than they came and stood in a line before the door. Randall says, "As soon as I saw them I felt a most blessed degree of the power of God." As he preached, a storm came up outside and a drenching rain fell. After the meeting Randall went out and spoke with each one of the mob, and not one of them gave an "unhandsome word". Later as Randall was going to an evening appointment, he saw the same group barring his pathway, but as he rode on unabated, they parted right and left and allowed him to pass unmolested, bowing and wishing him goodnight as he passed.

In 1777, Randall was invited to come to New Durham and he accepted. Writing of his trip he says, "It was a wonderful journey. Wherever I went, my blessed Master was with me. The power of God fell on old and young; sinners were crying for mercy and many were rejoicing in the Lord."

The people at New Durham wanted him to settle there, and after a day of fasting and prayer, both church and minister felt it to be the will of the Lord. The committee agreed to provide him a house and pay his moving bill as well as furnish him a definite salary from the town treasury as was the custom of the times. Randall accepted the house and allowed the people to move him, but the salary he refused, saying that it was not his purpose to confine his ministry wholly to one locality, but to hold himself at liberty to serve elsewhere as God might direct. On the 26th of March, 1778, he arrived in New Durham, New Hampshire, and settled there for life.

"In his arrangements with the citizens of New Durham, Mr. Randall gave his first recorded protest against the legal mode of settling ministers then in vogue. He would have no man taxed, or compelled to contribute for his support. He would have everything pertaining to worship and religious support left to the volition of the people . . . Though only one, his voice should be heard and his example set in the right direction.

"We are by no means to infer by this that he ignored the teaching of the scriptures respecting the support of the Gospel ministry. But rather like Paul, who from present necessity and perhaps more from

the corrective power of example wrought in a few cases at his handicraft, so Mr. Randall decided upon his present course simply as a temporary matter, to be changed as Providence might indicate. He had a good trade and later a small farm. To one or both of these he resorted as necessity required, but so managed as to secure time for study and extensive evangelistic work.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Life and Influence of the Rev. Benjamin Randall*, Rev. F. L. Wiley, Chapter 8.

## CHAPTER XIII

### GROWING THROUGH THE YEARS

Benjamin Randall, God's man for God's purpose, found himself designated by the Holy Spirit to head up a religious movement that was destined to change the attitudes and practices of many people in relation to the church and her place in society.

Standing on what he believed to be the teachings of God's Word, he advocated a departure from a state-controlled church, opposed the puppet-pastor who was supported by the taxes of unregenerated men, and preached vigorously the right and privilege of every individual to be saved by the plan of salvation as set forth in the Bible.

As could be expected, such a revolutionary departure from the accepted way soon drew fire and Randall and his followers found themselves highly unpopular in their own home towns. However, they were so convinced of the rightness of their position that they faced up to all opposition and prosecuted with unusual fervor the way of free will, free grace, and free salvation. The Lord soon added to their number other able leaders whose influence and ability lent much to the success of their cause. Two of these men, Tingley and Hibbard, we will mention briefly here.

Pelitia Tingley was graduated from Yale University in 1761, after which he studied theology for two years and then commenced to preach for the Congregationalists. Having preached over a year at Gorham, Maine, as a candidate, he gave a negative answer to the town to settle there in 1776.

Later he conducted religious services in New Market, New Hampshire. It was summer, very warm, and the sanctuary was ventilated for comfort. While he was reading his sermon, a gust of wind carried a part of his manuscript sailing through the window. This proved to be an important event in his life. He retired from that meeting with the resolution never again to attempt preaching till he had attained to a gospel that the winds could not take from him.

He sought God with prayer and tears till he received a new enduement of power through the Holy Spirit. On careful study, Mr. Tingley became convinced that sprinkling is not baptism, and that none but true believers are fit subjects. He embraced the doctrinal



sentiments of Randall, and was a factor much needed at the time, especially in the work of organization.

Daniel Hibbard was one of the first Baptist ministers to be ordained in Maine. He embraced the Calvinistic views and preached them faithfully. When he heard of Randall's doctrine, he carefully studied it and became convinced that this was both Biblical and sound, whereupon he embraced Free Baptist principles and allied himself with Mr. Randall.

The work of Mr. Randall prospered greatly, but he was deeply troubled because of the alienation between himself and his former associates. He greatly felt a need of someone who could provide fellowship and comradeship. Another source of worry was the meaning of certain difficult passages in the Bible. He had no person to whom he might counsel. As to books, practically all that were in print in his day taught Calvinism, and almost the only existing textbook on free salvation was the Bible.

Having no one to whom to go, Mr. Randall turned frequently to his God and his Bible with the hope of finding a solution to the questions that troubled him. It was during one of these times that he had a most unusual experience, which I quote to you from Mr. Randall's personal diary.

"Sometime in July (1780), being in great trial of mind because of such texts, and desiring solitude, I walked to a remote place on my farm, where I found a field of corn, which I entered. My soul being in great agony, I sat down upon a rock and prayed that my heavenly Father would teach me. All at once it seemed as if the Lord denied my request. This increased my trial and I said, 'Lord, why may I not be taught?' I then saw that my heart needed much purifying and refining. I said, 'Lord, here am I, take me and do with me as thou wilt.'

"And oh, the flaming power that instantly possessed my soul! It would be impossible for me to give one an adequate idea of the experience, unless he had passed through the same. The power increased in my soul until it stripped me of everything as to my affections. I tried to recollect my brethren and connections, but had no feeling save of the awful majesty of God, before whom I sank, as it were, into nothing.

"Then it appeared that I saw a white robe brought and put over me, which completely covered me, and I appeared as white as snow. A perfect calm, an awful reverence, pervaded my soul. A Bible was

then presented before the eyes of my mind, and I heard a still, small voice saying, 'Look therein.' I looked in at the beginning of Genesis and out at the closing of Revelation. I saw the seals of those difficult texts all unloosed and their explanations were seen in perfect harmony with a general atonement and a universal call."

In March, 1780, Mr. Randall had united with the Crown Point church. It soon became evident that for the best interests of the cause, he should be ordained to the ministry of preaching the gospel. Usage called for two ordained ministers to lay hands on the candidate, and these were available in the persons of Elders Lock and Lord.

Accordingly, the council, headed by these two men, met on Wednesday, April 5, 1780, in New Durham, New Hampshire. Elder Lord preached the sermon from Acts 13:1, 2. He also gave the charge. Elder Lock gave the hand of fellowship and offered the prayer of consecration. Thus Benjamin Randall was so ordained as to comply with ecclesiastical demands.

Soon after his ordination, Randall called a meeting of the New Durham brethren, preparatory to organizing them into a church. Mr. Randall was appointed to draw up the Articles of Faith and the Church Covenant and have them ready at the next meeting.

Accordingly, on June 30, 1780, the group came together to officially organize the church. After a devotional service, Mr. Randall read his report which was accepted without change. This done, four men and three women came forward, signed the covenant, and as an expression of their fellowship and union, joined hands.

Then Elder Randall presented the scriptures to them as their only rule of faith and practice, extended the hand of fellowship, and while all knelt, offered the prayer of consecration. Though not accepting the prefix "Free Will" before their name until twenty years later, thus was organized in due form the first Free Will Baptist church in the north.

The new church did not choose officers until early September when others had united. Then a full board was chosen and Elder Randall was elected pastor. In respect to the pastor, it was understood that he could go on evangelistic tours as God might direct.

The church agreed to maintain weekly meetings of a devotional nature, consisting of "voluntary prayer, singing, and exhortations by the brethren and sisters present." All were expected to attend and have some part in the services. Should the pastor be absent on

meeting day and no other minister be available, the members were to carry on the services.

This New Durham church entered into an agreement to have a meeting once each month which each member would be duty bound to attend, and there give an outline of his religious life during the previous month. At the close of any such meeting, appropriate church business might be taken up for consideration and official action.

In November, 1780, Mr. Randall, in company with a deacon, Robert Boody, made a trip to Maine in response to urgent requests from a church in Little Falls, and Gorham, Maine. No results are recorded as to the contact at Gorham. However, at Little Falls a precious revival resulted after which a church was organized with 100 members.

In February, 1791, an invitation came from a Brother Jewell, a Baptist, for Mr. Randall to come to Tamsworth, New Hampshire, which was a new town then, recently settled. A revival broke out and several people were converted. A church was organized in the western part of the town with a goodly number of members. Following this effort, the preacher went to Barrington, since named North Strafford, New Hampshire, and organized another strong church.

From Mr. Randall's journal, we take the following which tells of an evangelistic journey of the kind that were frequent during his ministry. "Early in the fall of 1781 I was deeply impressed with a desire to take a religious tour eastward as far as the Kennebec River. But discouraging conditions confronted me, it being near the close of the war and money scarce, of which I had but little. Then, too, it was unusual for a minister to go about and preach, such being regarded with suspicion on the part of many.

"On the last day of September I set off alone and traveled to Saco River, where I found a brother willing to accompany me to the end of my journey. The Lord granted His presence and prospered us on our way. The people showed us much kindness as we traveled."

Their first service was held on October 1 on Ker's Island, near Georgetown, and so impressed were the people that they requested a second service. Randall complied with their request and preached again the next forenoon. At this meeting many were converted and a substantial church was formed there. That afternoon Mr. Randall held a service at Woolwich, where a number of people lived who had "free" sentiments. They had become tired of the old lifeless,



religious formality and had been praying earnestly for a fiery, God-fearing evangelist to come to them and preach free salvation and heartfelt religion.

This strange evangelist seemed to be an answer to their prayers. Word of the first service spread rapidly and the next day a great number gathered for the service. Mr. Randall preached from Phil. 2:9 and as he preached, the Holy Spirit began to move. Several people accepted Christ and at the close of the service the preacher baptized five persons. Out of the 300 persons present, not more than four or five had ever witnessed a baptism by immersion.

Randall and his companion returned to Parker's Island and preached for a few days, after which they returned to Woolwich, where Mr. Randall baptized a number of persons and organized a church. Before leaving that part of the country, Randall had organized churches in Georgetown, Squam Island, and Durham.

This tour required 37 days and 400 miles of travel and during the time 47 meetings were conducted. He remained at home only a few days and then in answer to another call, went to Gorham and Scarboro, where revivals resulted in the conversion of several, who joined the Little Falls Church.

It was about this time that Samuel Weeks, a Baptist minister of East Parsonfield, Maine, came out with his entire church and took a stand with Randall. Soon thereafter, another group known as the Gray and Glovehester church did likewise. These churches were well organized on the same model as the New Durham Church and they looked to Mr. Randall for oversight and leadership.

However, inasmuch as there was no connecting organization, they each stood as independent churches, except that they were identical in doctrine and policy. Sensing a need of cooperation and unity among these churches, Mr. Randall began to pray for some kind of plan that would enable these groups to come together in a mutual endeavor and common fellowship.

In the meantime, problems were arising among the churches, brought on by the emissaries of false doctrines, and as had happened to the Free Will Baptist movement in the south, some of the people were led astray. The strongest of these false movements was Shakerism, which was flourishing in New York.

Two of the representatives of Ann Lee, the prophetess of Shakerism, came in and went to work proselyting Mr. Randall's churches. He immediately set about to counteract this influence and after a



short while was successful, but not before some of the work had been lost.

Prosperity continued, in spite of this side issue, and along about this time a substantial church at Gorham, Maine, came in with Randall. Soon thereafter, a Baptist minister by the name of Daniel Hibbard brought his congregation over into Randall's camp and in July of the following year the old Crown Point church, having disbanded, now came together again and called Mr. Randall to come and reorganize them into his group. As a pledge of good faith, they signed a covenant which Mr. Randall himself formulated.

On September 26, 1782, Mr. Randall went on another eastern tour, concluding it at Little Falls. Having sent word to several of the brethren beforehand to meet him there, he joined them in a conference at which they discussed the best methods of strengthening the work and uniting it. It was here that Randall presented a plan of organization and suggested a name for the body.

It was agreed by all present that these plans be thought over and prayed about, and that they should be laid before the churches for their consideration. Their conclusions were to be reported at a meeting to be held on Saturday, December 7, when, if reports were favorable, the movement would be fully inaugurated.

## CHAPTER XIV

### PATTERN FOR THE FUTURE

In this chapter of the Free Will Baptist story, it will be our purpose to show how our system of quarterly meetings and yearly meetings came to be adopted and the reasons therefor. Much of this material is taken from the book, *The Life and Influence of Rev. Benjamin Randall*, by Frederick L. Wiley. Mr. Wiley's account is most authentic, since he had access to many of Mr. Randall's personal papers and also the original records of the first quarterly meetings and yearly meetings. These records can now be found in the depository at the Baptist Historical Society, Rochester, New York where they have recently been taken from Chester, Pennsylvania. While they were yet in Chester, in the library of Crozer Theological Seminary, it was the privilege of this writer to examine them first hand, and thus verify the claims of Mr. Wiley as to the authenticity of his record as set forth in his very fine work.

The previous installment gave a resumé of the organization of the quarterly meeting in 1783. This was an organizational meeting at which time Randall was elected moderator and Pelatiah Tingley, clerk.

The first regular meeting of the new organization was held at New Gloucester in March, 1784. The program was as follows:<sup>1</sup>

#### SATURDAY AFTERNOON

1. Devotional: consisting of singing, prayer, and if time favors, exhortation.
2. Choice of officers: moderator, clerk, and committees.
3. Letters and verbal reports from constituent churches.
4. Examination of members as to doctrine, fellowship, etc.
5. Efforts to restore harmony where such efforts may be needed.

#### SATURDAY EVENING

Preaching followed by exhortation and general worship.

#### SUNDAY SERVICE

Morning—Prayer and general devotions

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<sup>1</sup> *Life and Influences of Benjamin Randall*, Wiley.

Forenoon—Preaching

Afternoon—Preaching

Evening—Preaching

Devotional services immediately preceding or following sermons, as conditions suggest.

#### MONDAY

Devotional

Unfinished business. New business named in letters or otherwise presented.

All business interspersed with much prayer, singing, and devotions.

It is to be noted that while Mr. Randall favored prearrangement of a general nature of these programs, he also insisted on enough flexibility to allow for a spiritual emphasis. An outstanding action of this session was the issuance of a quarterly meeting epistle which was designed to be circulated among the churches and read publicly to the members. This practice continued for many years and the unifying influence of this letter in fellowship, doctrine, and church methods was great.

The church letters were much like ours today, calling for church membership and spiritual statistics. These letters were read in the public quarterly meetings sessions and the business suggested in them was taken care of in the session. All copies of this and the circular letter were made by hand, the greater part of which was done by Mr. Randall, as secretary.

The September quarterly meeting was held at Woolwich, and here the question of what to do about Shakerism, the doctrine of Ann Lee, was considered. This false teaching was causing much disturbance among the churches in Maine and New Hampshire. The decision reached was that October 13 should be set aside as a day of fasting and prayer, "That God would sweep away this delusion by the breath of His Spirit."<sup>2</sup>

In some instances, the quarterly meeting had to take up cases of wayward churches and members and prescribe disciplinary measures. For the most part, however, these were rare cases. Quarterly meeting sessions were largely attended and their proceedings were harmonious. Revivals broke out at some of these meetings and spread to the adjoining towns.

Among the officers of the local church in those early days was that of ruling elder. In one of the quarterly meeting sessions the

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 16.

question came up as to the relations of the ruling elder to the church and ministry.

The answer given at the following meeting was "that the ruling elder is a church officer between a deacon and a teaching elder, or pastor: that he might conduct general religious meetings and by consent of the local church, administer the ordinances in the absence of the teaching elder, or pastor."<sup>3</sup> As the churches took up the settlement of resident pastors, the ruling elder was no longer a necessity, so the office ceased.

It might be well to note here an important question which was settled by vote of the quarterly meeting in September, 1784. The question was: "Is it proper to commune with one who, though not having been immersed, gives evidence of a change of heart and daily leads a Christian life?" The answer was "yes" by a unanimous vote, less one.<sup>4</sup>

Liberalism was prevalent even in those early days and one of its strong points was that salvation had been provided through Christ for everyone and that eventually everyone would be saved. The admonition to avoid this teaching was sent to the Free Will Baptist churches in a quarterly meeting epistle in these words:

"This is a tenet we fear has destroyed its thousands, though it is a groundless doctrine, and can easily be confuted by the scriptures. The plain assertion is before us, that, 'Except ye be converted . . . ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.'"<sup>5</sup>

This group of Free Will Baptists was noted from its inception for its unselfishness and cooperativeness. To illustrate, let us cite this example.

The Calvinistic churches of New Hampshire and Maine had organized into an annual association known as the New Hampshire Baptist Association. The Free Will Baptist group voted to send a letter to this association inviting visiting brethren to their meeting and hoping for continued correspondence. The letter is set out here just as it was written.

#### *To the New Hampshire Association*

Dearly Beloved in the Lord:

Feeling our hearts expand with love for the world, and with complacency toward all, of every name and denomination where we find

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



the divine image, we hereby testify our prayers for your prosperity.

We wish that all shyness, evil surmising, evil thinking in any of your hearts, or our own, against our neighbors or brethren, may be forever expelled. Let us mutually lay aside every weight and set the Lord, the worth of His cause, and immortal souls constantly before our eyes.

Our hearts and our doors have been, and still are, open to messengers of Jesus, of whatever name. We pray for and rejoice in the advancing reign of Him who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

From your sincere friends of the Baptist Quarterly Meeting held at New Durham, New Hampshire, June 3, 1786.

PELATIAH TINGLEY, *Clerk*.<sup>6</sup>

This letter received an answer and another was sent, which was never answered. Thus ended the idea of comity between the two groups.

A final illustration of the popularity and power of the quarterly meeting will suffice before we pass on to the next organizational milestone. In 1787 the church at Weeks Corner, Maine, invited the quarterly meeting to convene there for the December meeting. Notices were sent out to the surrounding towns and the people gladly accepted the invitation to attend and made their plans accordingly. For the actual account I quote from Mr. Wiley.

"On the morning of the first day the people of that section looked out over a level of snow below which fences and other landmarks had modestly sunk out of sight. The most objects in view were the big drifts which blockaded all highways leading to Weeks Corner . . . But those sturdy New Englanders were not to be daunted by anything so trifling as a snowstorm . . . Churches were well represented, reports were encouraging, business was disposed of with harmony and dispatch, devotional meetings were well sustained, and preaching was attended with much demonstration of divine power.

"Soon after the session got under way there were evidences of approaching revival. A transcript from Mr. Randall's journal is of interest here:

" 'The season seemed to me to be almost heaven. While I was preaching from Ephesians 4:30, the power of God attended, a great number were struck to the heart and cried for mercy. Then, when I was preaching again from Hebrews 10:3, the same was repeated. At communion the impressiveness was so great as to be almost unendurable. The house seemed much like being full of angels . . . ' "

However, all did not go well with the new group. One of the leading

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 16.

churches, the New Durham church, had become a spiritual wreck, brought about by lack of sufficient pastoral care. Mr. Randall was called to come to their rescue. After visiting with the people and probing into the affair, he called for a meeting at which decisive action would take place. When the crowd had gathered, he made the following statement:

"Considering how small is the number who stand fast in the truth, in comparison with those who have turned back, and that our covenant agreements are broken by the ungodly conduct of those professors whom have become backslidden:

"Agreed that we now regard our church connections dissolved, and proclaim it so to the world. Also, that these doings be read on the two next consecutive Sabbaths."<sup>7</sup>

On March 23 another meeting was held at which 21 persons came forward to form a new church. These began working and praying for revival, which was not long in coming. Soon 67 more were added to the number, three of whom became outstanding ministers. They were John Buzzell, a schoolmaster, who soon became Randall's invaluable assistant; Simon Pottle, and Joseph Boody. Under Buzzell's ministry revivals came to Middleton, Brookfield, and Wakefield and new churches were organized in Kittery, Pittsfield and Ossinee Hill, in Maine.

Now let us turn our attention to a most important event in our denominational history, that which concerns the organization of the yearly meeting.

For nine years the quarterly meetings had been a sufficient organizational means of holding Free Will Baptist churches intact. However, the tremendous growth and widespread expansion had caused this means to become outgrown. It had become impossible for the churches to represent themselves in the quarterly meetings as the rule required. Realizing that something should be done to correct this matter, Mr. Randall, along with seven others, most of whom were from his home church, met with other delegates from the New Hampshire churches to devise a plan. The meeting was held May 27, 1792 in Barnstead. The agreement which they reached follows herewith:

"That the name of the present Quarterly Meeting, holding its annual session at New Durham, be changed to that of a Yearly Meeting.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 18.

"That a new class of meetings, each to be held once in three months, be introduced between this and the churches, with the name of Quarterly Meetings.

"That each church attend to all its local business, maintain good discipline, take the scriptural steps with delinquents, to the last admonition; then if unsuccessful, refer the matter to the Quarterly Meeting. That each church, as now, have a clerk to keep its records . . . That the church send its clerk to the Quarterly Meeting, with his book of records, and several other messengers . . . That the Quarterly Meeting adjust all difficulties that may be referred to it by the churches, or arise in its executive sessions, if able; but if not, refer the same to the Yearly Meeting.

"That the Yearly Meeting consist of delegates from the several Quarterly Meetings, hold its sessions annually at times and places agreed upon, adjust all matters referred to it by the Quarterly Meetings, and transact any other legitimate business. It shall devise ways and means for the welfare and efficiency of its constituency, and exercise a general supervision over the entire denomination."<sup>8</sup>

This new system was adopted without a dissenting vote, and Mr. Randall was chosen as recording secretary. While the plan was ideal, it took several years of working it before all the bodies involved learned their exact duties and relationship. For more than fifty years, until the organization of the General Conference, the yearly meeting was the highest ecclesiastical body in the denomination.

This pattern of denominational organization set up by the Free Will Baptists soon came to be recognized as the most efficient and democratic form ever inaugurated. In the years that followed some others among the Baptist groups tried to copy it but were never as successful with it as was Mr. Randall.

The one great testimony to its effectiveness can be found in the fact that it yet remains as the basis of our present-day Free Will Baptist denomination.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 19.

## CHAPTER XV

### PUTTING THE ROOTS DOWN

Having followed the course of events in the preceding installment to the time of setting in order the Yearly Meeting system, it will be of much interest to read a summary of what this new form of meeting actually meant to the people. For this record I have gleaned from chapter 24 of *The Life and Influence of Rev. Benjamin Randall*, by Wylie. This is a description of the New Hampshire Yearly Meeting.

The New Hampshire Yearly Meeting during its early years held all its meetings at New Durham, usually during the month of June. Representatives from many parts of the state, and some from other states came to this meeting, sometimes numbering into the thousands. At several sessions the Sunday morning congregations were estimated to be three thousand. When we remember that there were no railroads in those days and that travel by wagon, horseback, and on foot was difficult, this number indeed takes on large proportions.

It is said that a company of pious women were accustomed to walking some fifty miles each way annually to attend this meeting. Another woman, Mrs. Joanna Horn, many times walked forty miles to be in the Yearly Meeting.

"As the different processions of pilgrims joined each other at road junctions, they would sometimes, as they neared the place of meeting, aggregate hundreds in line. The surrounding forests would echo with their songs of devotion. And the people no more needed hymn books than did the birds that responded from the overhanging branches."<sup>1</sup>

The question arises, "How did the town accommodate so many?" For two examples, let us look at the following. "One New Durham man of considerable property, with a large house and a heart to match, was a regular host on Yearly Meeting occasions. In after years his wife would relate some of her experiences as hostess. On such occasions, after furnishing her guests with every available article of softness in the house to lie upon, her only place for rest would be the bare floor of the attic. There she would seek a few hours of repose, but at one or two o'clock in the morning she would astir again, preparing supplies for the table."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Influence of Rev. Benj. Randall*, chapter 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



From the standpoint of a guest, the following is descriptive: "On reaching Yearly Meeting, I put up at Esq. Runnels with over one hundred others. When arrangements were made for the first night's lodging, the floors were completely covered, leaving me to get all the sleep I could sitting upon a block in the chimney corner. As to stillness, there wasn't any. The house did not cease to echo with the voice of singing, prayer, or private conversation till morning called us to our new duties."

Early in the life of the Free Will Baptist movement definite standards were set up for ordination to the ministry. Whatever the natural or acquired abilities of the candidates, certain other qualifications were also demanded. "The men must be of good repute, mentally balanced, and deeply pious. They must be sound in Biblical doctrines, according to evangelical interpretations, have aptness to teach and ability to edify, have a gift for soul winning, and give evidence of a Divine call . . ." Education was counted a definite asset and in some places was deemed a necessity. One of the greatest trials was that of having to preach a trial sermon before a full congregation, with the ordaining council sitting in judgment on the candidate.

The following account of the ordination of John Buzzell will suffice to give a good picture of an ordination service. "They first had worship at the Middleton meeting house, where Buzzell preached on trial to good acceptance. The council (Randall, Weeks, Whitney) then repaired to a private house. Buzzell proceeded to give an account of his conversion, call to the ministry and success in former efforts at soul-winning. Then followed critical questions by the brethren on the Council, and all to good satisfaction . . .

"At ten o'clock the next morning about 1,000 people gathered in and about the House of God to witness the interesting and impressive ceremony . . . Eld. Randall preached the sermon from 2 Corinthians 5:20. Weeks offered the prayer of consecration and gave the charge. Whitney gave the hand of fellowship, and Boody the closing prayer . . . Each part of the service was well sustained. The whole was solemn and impressive. . ."<sup>3</sup>

Another matter which was met and solved by the new church in characteristic manner was that of church music. During the 18th century, most of the church singing was congregational. Some of the church leaders suggested that the matter of the music might be improved if it were put into the hands of a few trained singers. In

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<sup>3</sup> *Life and Influence of Rev. Benjamin Randall*, chapter 21.

North Durham, a "Singing Society" had been formed under the leadership of a Mr. Jackson, and in 1793, this group requested Mr. Randall to use them as a regular choir in the Sunday services of the church, permitting them to have complete control of that part of the service.

Mr. Randall's reply by letter, dated May 10, 1793, is given herewith:

*Mr. Jackson and the Singing Society:*

In response to your request, we would say: As "God is a Spirit and they that worship, must worship him in spirit and truth" nothing but spiritual service can be pleasing to Him. Hence, should a society, ever so large, and understanding the rules of music ever so well, render the service of song without the spirit, it could only please the ear of men, and not the great heart-searching God . . .

You well say that singing is a part of the worship of God, and ought to be performed with sincerity. Just so, such is the declaration of the Scriptures: ". . . I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding." . . .

How important that we sing with the spirit! How presumptuous must it be for anyone who lives after a vain and carnal manner, uses his tongue in profane language, to attempt to lead an important part of the solemn worship of God. As well may an unconverted man lead in prayer or preaching as in singing. For the latter is equally sacred with the former.

But to conclude. We wish you well. May you all be engaged to know God. May you all come into that state in which you can worship Him in spirit and truth here, and be prepared to join with the millions of worshippers hereafter.

Yet we must inform you that, for reasons above stated, we believe it cannot be pleasing to God for us to give our consent for His worship to be led by any but those who are practical believers in Christ. In behalf of the Church at New Durham. Benjamin Randall, Pastor.<sup>4</sup>

Another vital issue on which Mr. Randall and the Free Will Baptist church took a definite stand was that of the liquor question. During those days it was common for both ministers and laymen to indulge in strong drink and many prominent churchmen were not shy in their public approval of "modest use of strong spirits." Randall spoke out scathingly against this practice and led his group in denouncing such in the life of the Christian.

One incident illustrative of Mr. Randall's total abstinence principles must stand for many that cannot be admitted.

"On an afternoon of December 1800, he left home, purposing to preach the next day at Alton; but when about two miles away he was attacked with a violent cholic, an illness to which he was an

<sup>4</sup> *Life and Influence of Rev. Benjamin Randall*, Chapter 22.

occasional victim. He stopped at Mrs. Willey's where for twelve hours, he struggled with excruciating pain. At times it was feared he must die . . . While he was suffering the most acute paroxysms of pain, it was suggested that if he would drink some liquor he might obtain some relief. But he positively refused. Whereupon a bystander exclaimed: 'I believe that these spells are sent upon Eld. Randall as a judgment, because he is so bitterly opposed to using ardent spirits . . . ' "5

At the turn of the century, the movement led by Mr. Randall expanded into Massachusetts and Vermont. It was in early March of 1800 that he went on a missionary tour through western Vermont, where he found the work spreading under the evangelistic work of Joseph Boody, Jr., of New Durham. In Hardwich, Vermont, a group of 52 converts was organized into a church by Mr. Randall. Following in rapid succession, four more churches were organized and at the Yearly Meeting in New Durham the following June, the Strafford Quarterly Meeting of Vermont was received into its fellowship.

Also in this year, Mr. Randall, in company with Nathan Keniston as traveling companion, set off on a journey into Massachusetts. On this circuit, the men took in the cities of Boston, Andover, Braintree, and Scituate. While no churches were organized during this trip, foundations were laid for future Free Will Baptist churches and great revivals resulted at every place where they stopped.

Thus far during nearly a quarter of a century of labors in building up churches and perfecting all the organizations, Mr. Randall had not appended an official name to his group. He was in hopes that an understanding could be brought about between his own and the other Baptist group. However, in 1804, it became at last apparent that this hope was futile and that the breach was growing wider.

Accordingly, Mr. Randall and his associates deemed it wise for their adherents to be known by a distinguishing name. The record of the legislative act in which the group was officially named is preserved as follows:

#### STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the House of Representatives, December 7, 1804.

Resolved, That the people in this state, known by the name of Free Will Anti-pedobaptist Church and Society, shall be considered as a distinct religious sect or denomination, with all the privileges as such, of the Constitution.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 25.



Sent up for concurrence.

John Langdon, Speaker.

In the Senate, December 8.

Nicholas Gilman, President.

Not returned nor approved by His Excellency, the Governor, it therefore becomes a law.

Joseph Pearson, Secretary of State.

The Governor excused himself from signing the resolution on the grounds that it was needless; that the Society possessed all rights and immunities before that they could have afterwards, and that under the constitution every religious sect in the state "really stood in the same footing."

Free Will Baptists in Maine soon followed the New Hampshire pattern and a resolution was adopted by the State legislature bodies recognized them officially as the Freewill Baptist Anti-pedobaptist Church and Society of Maine.

In the course of time, as will be seen as our story progresses, the term "Anti-pedo baptist" was dropped from the title, and in some areas the term "will" was discarded. For many years the names "Free Baptist and "Freewill Baptist" were used synonymously and interchangeably.

It is to the everlasting credit to Mr. Randall and his associates, as well as to Paul Palmer and his followers, that they were able to take an appellation of contempt and use it as a name which later commanded so much respect. It is well known that the early advocates of free grace, free will and free salvation were contemptuously branded "free-willers." This name brought much persecution on the early members of our denomination but they, with characteristic godly patience and Christian fortitude, carried on undaunted.

Gradually, the name lost its connotation as the adherents to this faith proved their sincerity by persistent and loyal Christian living. So it was most natural that when the matter of an official name for the new movement came to be considered, Freewill Baptist was the only logical title to consider.



## CHAPTER XVI

### BIRTH OF THE CONFERENCE

In the early part of the year 1808, it became more and more evident that Mr. Randall's strength was failing rapidly. That he, himself, also realized that the end was near is seen from the entries in his diary for that year:

January 17, 1808:

At the House of God in much feebleness, yet the spirit raised me up to speak from Luke 17:32. A solemn scene. Returned home in great weakness.

February, 1808:

In my home confinement I felt moved to make a new surrender of myself to the Lord. Had I a thousand such souls as mine, I could trust them all with the Lord Jesus.

February 28, 1808:

Was carried by sleigh to God's House and spoke awhile, but was so overcome with difficulty, I was gotten home.

When at all possible, Mr. Randall would be up writing or studying the Scriptures. As the May 2 meeting approached, he prepared his final address to the brethren. A portion of that message is given herewith.

Durham, N. H.

May 18, 1808

*My very dear Brethren and Friends:*

I thank God that, as a disciple of Jesus, I am permitted once more to write you.

May the God of grace manifest His presence and power in your assembly and roll the weight of his cause upon more souls. May your meeting together be more than simply to salute each other, rejoice together, pray, praise, preach, and go home happy. It may properly be all this, but it should be more, much more!

My dear brethren in the ministry, you are precious in the sight of the Lord, and exceedingly precious to my soul. I know your work is great. I know your trials are many within and without. You greatly fear that you will not do your work aright and agreeable to the mind of God. . . But be not discouraged. The Lord will stand by you and give you strength equal to your day. Only trust in him and he will be all you want or need.

. . . I have been in the ministry of God's Word thirty-one years last March and have ever found Him, in every state, all I needed. And bless His wonder-working name, he is that to me at the present moment . . . I am more and more confirmed in the doctrines which the Lord gave me to preach. I am strong in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am sitting

and waiting for whatever the will of my Father may be, and I know he will do all things right.

Cheer up! Ye poor, yet rich; ye weak, yet strong; ye trembling, yet valiant ministers of Jesus. Wear out in the cause and rejoice in the privilege!

. . . I will soon meet you in glory. Pray for your unworthy brother. I die, your servant for Jesus' sake.

BENJAMIN RANDALL<sup>1</sup>

A few hours before his death the Lord gave him strength for awhile, so that he talked, prayed, and praised God loud enough to be heard in the next room. Then followed a relapse from which he never rallied and at 2 a.m. on Monday, October 22, 1808, Benjamin Randall died. The funeral was held four days later by Rev. John Buzzell. His text was 2 Timothy 4:7, 8. Mr. Randall's wife and eight children survived him.

Thus ended the earthly life of one of the most noble of God's servants. However, his labors and influence live on even in this 20th century and the church which he helped to establish is greater now than it has ever been.

In the beginning of the Free Will Baptist movement there was no previously matured plan of organization or operation. The first churches were entirely independent and after 3½ years they united into a Quarterly Meeting. In so doing, each church surrendered a part of its former independence and received the counsel, cooperation, and support of all others.

This arrangement worked well for awhile, but after 8½ years, the number of churches and their increasing wants required more frequent sessions of the Quarterly Meeting. This brought about the organization of the Yearly Meeting which held its annual session in four different places. Under this organization, the churches grouped themselves into Quarterly Meetings and the Quarterly Meetings into Yearly Meetings and this plan was followed for thirty-five years.

The denomination continued to grow until there were seven Yearly Meetings with churches in nine states and four British provinces. So widespread was the work that there was "no means of obtaining a report from the entire body, of securing harmony in doctrine, uniformity in practice, or concert in action." There was no representative body that could speak for the denomination, as the Quarterly Meeting and Yearly Meeting once had.

Randall foresaw this very condition, and suggested to the New

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<sup>1</sup> *Life and Influence of Rev. Benjamin Randall*, Chapter 28.

Durham Quarterly Meeting in 1805 that a "General Conference of all the Elders" be established. The subject was referred to the Yearly Meeting and an annual Ministers' Conference was organized and designated to meet in connection with the November session of the Yearly Meeting. This meeting never quite answered the purpose or met the need, and was discontinued in due course of time.

Twenty years later, the same question came up. This time it was proposed that a representative delegated body whose authority should be derived from the churches was the answer to the need. Some were fearful that such an organization would remove the local autonomy and invest central authority in the higher body and thus the proposal was treated with much caution.<sup>2</sup>

The first direct action towards setting up the General Conference came in 1826 at the Yearly Meeting in Sandwich, New Hampshire. The question was raised by Rev. Enoch Place, "Is it expedient to make any alterations in the present arrangement of the Yearly Meetings and to establish a General Yearly Conference for the benefit of the whole?"<sup>3</sup>

It came up again in the November Yearly Meeting and this time was referred to a Committee of Twelve for some definite recommendations. The report of this committee was to the effect that all churches continue to report to the Quarterly Meeting, and the Quarterly Meetings to the Yearly Meetings as heretofore. That there be two Yearly Meetings in Maine, and one each in the following states: New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, and that each Yearly Meeting choose delegates to compose a General Conference, the first session of which shall be held at Tunbridge, Vermont, the next October. The report was received enthusiastically throughout the denomination.<sup>4</sup>

In accordance with the direction of the body, delegates were chosen by the Yearly Meetings, and the first General Conference met at Tunbridge, Vermont, on Thursday, October 11, 1827. "Nineteen delegates were present from New England and one from New York; the whole number of ministers being about 30. The meeting was called to order by Nathaniel King, a resident of the place, and Jonathan Woodman addressed the throne of Grace."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *History of the Free Will Baptists*—Vol. 1, pp. 435-448, Stewart.

<sup>3</sup> *History of F. W. B.*, Vol. 1, p. 437.

<sup>4</sup> *Minutes of General Conference*—p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> I. D. Stewart—*History of F. W. B.*—p. 438, 440, 441.

Rev. Enoch Place was elected moderator of the conference. He was a man just past 40 years of age. In appearance, Mr. Place was a large and dignified man and his voice was strong and heavy. Rev. Hosea Quimby, a young man of deep piety and outstanding intellect was chosen clerk of the conference.

Conference sessions were held morning and evening, the afternoon being given over to worship services. Reports were read from the Yearly Meetings and all business introduced was referred to appropriate committees. Some of the more important items are given as follows: "It was agreed that regeneration and baptism were essential to church membership; that each church should have full authority to discipline its own members; but a minister should not be received or excluded without the advice of an Elder's Conference, or a Council of Ministers, and that church. Quarterly Meeting Clerks make their Annual Reports with great care, giving full statistics. It was agreed that the ministry must be experimentally pious, called of God, led by the Spirit, and holy in life.

"The propriety of ordaining a colored man came up by reference from the New Durham Quarterly Meeting, as objections had been made to the ordination of Robert Tash, then living in Exeter. Conference at once trampled the pro-slavery prejudice against color beneath their feet, and unanimously 'Resolved, That the color of a candidate for the ministry should have no influence on his ordination, provided he be other wise qualified.'

"Tash was ordained a fortnight later."<sup>6</sup>

Among other needs was that of devising some plan for setting ministers as pastors of local churches. It seems that the practice had been to ordain ministers as evangelists, thus giving the churches no claim upon their gratuitous labors. It was voted, "that a society be formed in each Quarterly Meeting, to receive annual subscriptions and donations, and appropriate the same to travelling preachers, who shall be under the direction of the Quarterly Meetings."<sup>7</sup>

From its very beginning the Free Will Baptist denomination had been traduced and misrepresented by heretical men posing as Free Will Baptist preachers. False doctrines had been passed on to the public as Free Will Baptist doctrine and the scandalous lives of these men reflected against the denomination. In order to correct this

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 441.



abuse, General Conference decided to publish a declaration of the doctrines and practices of the Free Will Baptist denomination.

A committee consisting of John Buzzell and George Lamb, of Maine; Enoch Place and Samuel B. Dyer, of New Hampshire; George Hackett, of Vermont; Reuben Allen of Rhode Island; and Nathaniel Brown of New York, was appointed to report at the next conference. According to the records, this committee was never called on to report.

The second General Conference was held October 9, 1828, at Sandwich, New Hampshire. All the Yearly Meetings were represented by letter, and only one had no delegates. There were 36 delegates present, five of whom had been members of their state legislatures. Rev. Nathaniel King was elected moderator of the Conference.

The Conference did some important and much needed work which can be summarized as follows:

- 1) A doctrinal statement on atonement was adopted which read, "the blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to atone for all sins, and the sins of all men; and does thus atone when man exercises repentance and faith . . . ."

- 2) The plan for supporting an itinerant ministry was again taken under advisement, but very little could actually be done except to encourage the churches and individuals to contribute more liberally. Some of the larger churches had employed their own pastors.

- 3) The question of Free-Masonry in the church was brought up and discussed. It was finally decided to postpone any definite action until next Conference.

- 4) Conference recommended appointment of an agent in each Yearly Meeting for the sale of Free Will Baptist publications.

- 5) Conference recommended abstinence from the "use of ardent spirits."

- 6) All who were "convinced of the utility of Sabbath schools" were advised to organize them.

The third session of General Conference convened at Spafford, Onondage County, New York, October 10, 1829. The delegation numbering 15 represented every Yearly Meeting in the conference. Rev. Henry Hobbs, of Maine, was chosen moderator. Hobbs had had wide experience in the state legislature and was an efficient presiding officer. J. M. Yearnshaw, of Rhode Island was elected clerk pro tem.

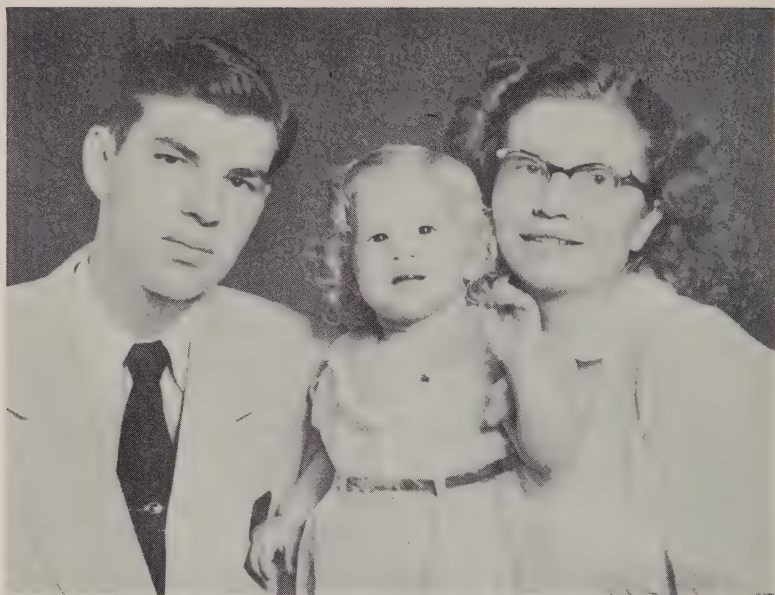
# First Bible College Classes



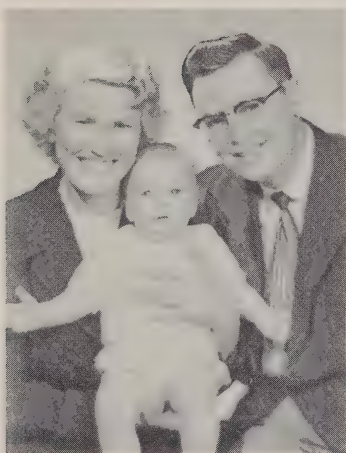
This picture shows the enrollment for 1943-44 as the Bible college opened the second semester of its second year. Dr. L. C. Johnson, president, is standing at right front.



Members of the first graduating class in 1944 were (from left to right) front row, Mrs. Marie Hyatt, Missouri; Mrs. Damon C. Dodd, Missouri; back row, Damon C. Dodd, Missouri, and George W. Waggoner, Illinois.



Rev. and Mrs. Carlisle Hanna and Brenda Kay are in North India.



Also in North India are Rev. and Mrs. Daniel R. Cronk and James Randall.



Serving in Japan are Rev. and Mrs. Wesley Calvery.

"The business transactions were all harmonious, and among other things it was resolved that 'the Holy Scriptures are the primary rule of faith and practice for the church of Christ' and 'it is the duty of every Free Will Baptist to guard with the utmost vigilance against any innovation upon the fundamental truth . . .' It was agreed that in the ministry, as such, 'there is no authority for the government of the church,' but it resides exclusively in the church itself. The support of family worship, weekly prayer meetings, and a kneeling attitude in time of prayer, were recommended."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *History of Free Will Baptists*, Stewart, Vol. 1, p. 446.



## CHAPTER XVII

### VENTURE WITH A VISION

The General Conference of Free Will Baptists, although organized in 1827, did not formally adopt any constitution or by-laws until 1841. At that time it was deemed expedient by the body to set up certain rules and regulations for the governing of the Conference, so the following was adopted by way of a constitution:<sup>1</sup>

#### SECTION II—CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

##### OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

Article 1—This conference shall be called the General Conference of the Freewill Baptist connection; and shall be composed of delegates chosen from yearly meetings of said connection, which yearly meeting shall have been recognized as such by the conference in the manner mentioned in the second article of this Constitution.

Article 2—Any yearly meeting may be received as a body into this Conference by vote of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the members present at any regular session. It shall be the duty of yearly meetings to report themselves by delegation and letter to each session of the Conference giving in their letters their statistics.

Article 3—Each yearly meeting belonging to this Conference shall be entitled to representation by one delegate; and every yearly meeting whose church communicants amount to one thousand five hundred, to two delegates, and one additional delegate to each additional thousand church members.

Article 4—The stated sessions of this Conference shall be held once in three years, to commence on the first Wednesday in October, at 10 o'clock, a.m., the place for each session to be designated by the session next preceding, or by a committee appointed by such preceding session for that purpose. Extra sessions may be appointed, or the time between sessions lengthened by vote of  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the members present at any session of Conference.

Article 5—The officers of this Conference shall consist of a standing clerk, who shall retain his office until he resigns or another be chosen to fill his place; a moderator, assistant moderator, and as-

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<sup>1</sup> *Free Will Baptist Faith*—Dover, New Hampshire, January 1, 1869.

sistant clerks, to be chosen, at each session. Said officers to be chosen by ballot, or by nomination of a committee appointed for that purpose.

Article 6—It shall be the duty of the standing clerk to keep a record of the doings of the Conference. It shall be the duty of the moderator to preside in the sessions of the Conference. It shall be the duty of the assistant officers to perform the duties usually devolving upon such officers.

Article 7—It shall be the duty of the Conference to receive and act upon communications from the yearly meetings properly belonging to this body, to exercise supervision over the printing establishment, and consult for the interest of religion in the Free-will Baptist denomination.

Article 8—This Conference shall have the right to discipline, and if necessary, exclude such yearly meetings and other associations as may be connected with it; but in no case shall it have power to reverse or change the decisions of churches, quarterly meetings, or yearly meetings, or any other religious bodies.

Article 9—This Conference may make such by-laws and regulations, not repugnant to this Constitution, as it may deem necessary.

Article 10—This Constitution may be amended at any regular session of this Conference by vote of  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the members present, provided such amendment has been proposed at a previous session, and approved by at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the yearly meetings belonging to the Conference.

Eighteen articles are listed in the By-Laws, two of which will give a good insight into the work and decorum of the General Conference. Article 5 lists the committees to be appointed at each session, and they were the Committees on:

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1—The Printing Establishment | 10—Property                  |
| 2—Educational                | 11—Peace                     |
| 3—Sabbath Schools            | 12—Church Polity             |
| 4—Temperance                 | 13—Petitions and Requests    |
| 5—Ministry                   | 14—State of Religion         |
| 6—Slavery                    | 15—Observance of the Sabbath |
| 7—Missions                   | 16—Doctrine                  |
| 8—Correspondence             | 17—State of the Denomination |
| 9—Moral Reform               |                              |

Article 5 closed by providing that "Special committees may be appointed at the pleasure of the Conference."

Article 16 of the By-Laws reads, "No whispering shall be allowed in Conference without leave of the moderator; but all members shall

pay strict attention to the business of Conference." Evidently the business of General Conference was considered to be of such importance and the responsibility of each individual was so keen that the strictest of attention to the matters at hand was expected and required of everyone in attendance.

The growth of the General Conference was steady and consistent, and the Free Will Baptist Register for 1869 showed 29 yearly meetings, 150 quarterly meetings, 1248 ordained and licensed ministers, and 63,543 members.

Free Will Baptists have been missionary-minded almost since the inception of the denomination. In 1832 the first "Freewill Baptist Foreign Mission Society" was organized. This organization came about as a result of a letter written by Rev. Amos Sutton, an English General Baptist missionary in India. The letter, written to the *Morning Star* and published, April 13, 1832, closed as follows: "I have lived more than six years in the province of Orissa, and a great part of the time close to this enormous Jagarnath. I have seen the mangled victims of his infuriated adorers lying by hundreds upon hundreds exposed to the birds and beasts. I have listened to their dying exclamations . . . I have seen the pit dug, and the fire kindled in it to consume the young widow with her husband's corpse. . . . The Gospel is the antidote for all these miseries. . . . Come, then, my American brethren, come over and help us."<sup>2</sup>

The publication of this letter led to the formation of the Free Will Baptist Mission Society in 1832 and in January, 1833, it was chartered by the State Legislature of Maine. Eld. John Buzzell was chosen as first president in March.

In June of 1834, Mr. Sutton came before the New Hampshire yearly meeting and spoke in behalf of the need in India. At the close of his message, an offering of \$100 was received. In September, 1835, Mr. Sutton returned to India with several new missionary recruits, among which were Jeremiah Phillips and Eli Noyes and their wives. These were the first Free Will Baptist missionaries ever to be sent out by the denomination and for a while they worked with the English General Baptists. However, in 1836 after general and harmonious consultation, it was agreed that the Free Will Baptist missionaries would occupy their own station. Sambhalpur, 250 miles from Cuttack, the General Baptist station, was chosen and our missionaries went at once to their new fields.

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<sup>2</sup> *His Name Among All Nations*—Barnard—p. 101.

Interest in missions increased rapidly over the denomination so that soon other missionaries were sent out to India. In May, 1840, Dr. and Mrs. Otis Bachelor and Miss Hannah W. Cummings were sent and in November, 1843, Rev. James C. Dow and wife joined the India group. In September, 1841, the Balasore quarterly meeting was organized in India and the work was set up on a more prosperous scale.

The following excerpts taken from the Digest of General Conference Law, published in 1895, gives a summary of the growth of the missionary spirit among Free Will Baptist people over the years.

October 10, 1835—Byron, New York—"Conference declares that the cause of missions is the cause of God, and that the prosperity of the denomination depends in great measure upon the success of the mission movement in the churches."

October 4, 1837—Greenville, Rhode Island—"Conference recommends the mission societies to enlarge their operations, trusting in God to provide necessary means."

October 2, 1844—Plainfield, New York—"Conference praises God for the prosperity attending the infant mission in Orissa (India) and urges the operation of the cent-a-week system in the collection of mission funds."

October 10, 1868—Buffalo, New York—"Conference directs investigation respecting the propriety of opening a mission in China and Turkey."

October 4, 1871—Hillsdale, Michigan—"The executive committee of the Foreign Mission Society is authorized to estimate the amount required annually for the India field, and apportion the same upon the churches."

September 25, 1889—Harper's Ferry, West Virginia—"The Foreign Mission Board is to consider the expediency of establishing a mission in Africa."

This latter idea became a reality when in 1900, a young African by the name of Lewis P. Clinton, a graduate of the Free Will Baptist College for Negroes (Storer College in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia) was sent back to Liberia. His support was furnished by the Free Will Baptist Young People's Societies. He established a mission at Grand Bassa, Liberia, and for years reported regularly to the *Morning Star*. It is assumed that this work was taken over by the Northern Baptists after 1911.

During these prosperous years, Free Will Baptists carried on a



thorough and aggressive home mission program. Let us trace the activities of the Home Mission Board down through the years by means of the Digest of Conference Law.

The Freewill Baptist Parent Home Mission Society of North America was organized at Dover, New Hampshire, August, 1834.

October 4, 1837—Greenville, Rhode Island—"Conference recommends the Home Mission Society to keep an agent traveling in the field for the purpose of instructing the churches and collecting funds."

In 1844, the General Conference recommended that special attention be given toward establishing churches in the large cities, and in 1847 New York, Buffalo, and Cincinnati were designated as cities where Free Will Baptist churches should be organized.

October 1, 1862—Hillsdale, Michigan—"The quarterly meeting should arrange to have every church visited . . . by at least two of its ministers each year, who should devote at least two days of religious worship, for the benefit of the church and the salvation of souls."

The controversy which raged over the question of slavery vitally affected Free Will Baptists and the northern group represented by General Conference went on record as being opposed to slavery in any form. Among other documents of historical value to Free Will Baptists to be found in the historical repository in Rochester, New York, is a letter from President Lincoln to the General Conference of Free Will Baptists commending them for their position.

Immediately after the war between the states, the following action was taken:

October 4, 1865—Lewiston, Maine—"Conference directs immediate efforts for sending the Gospel to the freedmen."

Out of this action of General Conference came Storer College for Negroes, which was established at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, in 1867. Dr. O. B. Cheney, president of Bates College, Lewiston, Maine, visited Mr. John Storer of Sanford, Maine in behalf of Bates. Instead of a gift to Bates College, Storer proposed to give \$10,000 to some society which would "raise an equal amount toward the founding of a school in the south for the benefit of the colored people."<sup>3</sup> Dr. Cheney accepted the challenge and in a short time was able to raise the other \$10,000.

At the annual meeting of the Home Mission Board in Northwood,

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<sup>3</sup> *History of Storer College*—Miss Kate J. Anthony—August 15, 1883.

New Hampshire, June 6, 1867, a body, composed of 25 gentlemen was organized as the "Commission for the Promotion of Education in the South." Out of this came Storer College, the first session of which institution began on Monday, October 2, 1867. This school is still in operation on the original site and it was the privilege of this writer to visit there briefly in December, 1954. The institution is governed by an interdenominational board of control and no longer has any connections with Free Will Baptists.

At about the same time, a Bible training school was opened for Negroes in Cairo, Illinois, under the name of the Manning Bible Institute. This school was very active until the early 1920s when it was closed because no funds were available for its operation. Many of the leaders among the United American Free Will Baptists, (the Negro movement) received their training at Manning Institute, in Cairo, Illinois.

October 7, 1874, Providence, Rhode Island—"Conference advises the raising of a fund of \$50,000 for the Boston Church." This fund was raised through the Sunday Schools and Young People's organizations in three years.

July 21, 1880—Weirs, New Hampshire—"The coming of the Chinese to this country opens a new door for missionary work, and the churches which have Chinese near them, should use all reasonable efforts to Christianize them."

General Conference maintained a standing committee known as the "Committee on the New West" whose functions was to push the Free Will Baptist Church westward as the country grew and to have new organizations in those areas constantly. It is very significant to note that this committee, with the late Rev. John H. Wolfe as chairman, had a report to offer the General Conference in 1910 in which four new churches were proposed in Montana and Wyoming. This report was ruled out of order in view of the pending merger proposals.

General Conference established educational institutions in various localities. The records of General Conference indicate the following schools and Bible Institutes:

Biblical School—Whitestown, New York  
 Maine State Seminary—Lewiston, Maine  
 New Hampton College—  
 Hillsdale College—Hillsdale, Michigan  
 Bates College—Lewiston, Maine

In 1868, General Conference voted to endow New Hampton and

Hillsdale Colleges to the amount of \$75,000 and Hillsdale and Bates Colleges to the amount of \$100,000 each and that efforts be made to supply every young man, studying for the ministry in either of the theological schools, the sum of \$200 annually. In 1889 the Conference authorized the establishment of a correspondence school. This school was duly established and put into operation.

The idea of a cooperative plan of support is not a novel one in the Free Will Baptist movement. At the 21st session of General Conference in Hillsdale, Michigan, October 4, 1871, a cooperative program was adopted as follows:<sup>4</sup>

"Conference decides to raise annually a sum of not less than fifty cents per resident member of the denomination, to be divided in the proportion of 2/5 to home missions, 2/5 to foreign missions, 2/5 to education, and the quarterly and yearly meeting clerks are directed to apportion the amounts to the churches." Thus, the original cooperative program in the Free Will Baptist denomination was 40% for foreign missions, 40% for home missions, and 20% for education.

To further emphasize these needs, special days were designated through the year when the programs were to be presented to the churches and special offerings were to be made for each cause. In 1892 the total budget for these departments was set for the three ensuing years thus:

1893	_____	\$ 50,000
1894	_____	75,000
1895	_____	100,000

In this connection, it must be borne in mind that only 63,000 members were being called in to support these programs and raise these budgets.

From the foregoing it can be seen that Free Will Baptist denomination was a well-organized, smooth-functioning machine. In the next chapter we will see how this organization was used in bringing about the so-called merger between Free Will Baptists and Northern Baptists.

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<sup>4</sup> *Digest of Conference Law*—Page 104.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE LIGHT THAT FAILED

The growth of the Free Will Baptist movement in the north never reached phenomenal proportions, and at no time in its history were there more than 86,000 communicants reported. However, the southern group was stronger numerically and after the war between the states and the reconstruction period, the southern Free Will Baptists outgrew the northern group.

The northern movement, as it grew, put down organizational roots designed to make for a powerful and close-knit ecclesiastical order. Politically, it soon came to be second to none and those who were part of the official family constantly maneuvered to tighten the political circle. In course of time, the denomination began to lose its Baptist character and take on an episcopalian atmosphere. Thus the stage was beginning to be set for the final act of the Free Will Baptist drama in the north.

The merger idea first began to become a public issue when the Free Will Baptists, the Disciples of Christ, and the Northern Baptists began exploratory conferences as early as 1880. It was the prevailing opinion that the three groups would benefit greatly by the merger, inasmuch as their numbers would be multiplied and their prestige enhanced. Several meetings were held and a number of committees were appointed.

At the final meeting between the three groups the two Baptist bodies joined forces against the Disciples of Christ groups and refused to talk further with them on the grounds of their doctrine of baptismal regeneration. The Disciples group pointed out that the Baptist groups need not accept this point of doctrine, whereupon the Free Will Baptist representative immediately launched into a tirade against any denomination that was divided on points of doctrine and practice. When the Free Will Baptist man had finished speaking, one of the Disciples of Christ representatives quietly reminded him of the fact that even then some Free Will Baptist churches advocated foot-washing while others did not accept it, and some preached baptismal regeneration while other groups branded it as unsound doctrine. The meeting rose to a fever pitch and for a moment it threatened to get out of control. However, the men realized what they were doing and



came to order, but not before irreparable harm was done. The Disciples of Christ delegates left the meeting and did not return again, thus ending their part in the merger.<sup>1</sup>

In 1890, the merger talk between the General Conference of Free Will Baptists and the Northern Baptists again warmed up. Two of the chief Free Will Baptist proponents of the movement were Rev. Henry M. Ford, home mission secretary, and Rev. Harry S. Meyers, youth secretary, and it was largely through their influence that a committee was appointed in 1898 to work with the Northern Baptists on these merger possibilities.<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime there had been some by-play in the General Conference to get everything ready for the coming merger. In 1888-89, a directive from General Conference had advised all Free and Free Will Baptist churches in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and other remote areas to unite with the Northern Baptist church nearest them, inasmuch as General Conference could no longer be responsible for them. Thus, a number of churches were sloughed off and given to the Northern Baptists with this one bold proposal. This explains why we have no trace of the Free Will Baptist churches today in the above-mentioned states. The Free Will Baptist churches which would not go to the Northern Baptists finally were forced to close their doors and cease functioning.

The year 1892 saw other significant changes made in the constitution of General Conference. The conference meeting was held that year in Lowell, Massachusetts, October 5-12, and there were 81 official delegates enrolled, besides ministers. The body approved the Articles of Incorporation which had been drawn up in 1891 and approved of a change of name from General Conference of Free Will Baptists of North America to General Conference of Free Baptists.

In the minutes of the meeting of 1892 it is recorded that the yearly meetings and associations shall have the right to vote on the new charter of incorporation, and when  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the membership of the denomination has voted in favor, then all yearly meetings and association treasurers shall transfer properties and funds to the treasurer of the new conference.<sup>3</sup>

In the same meeting it was voted to ask all the benevolent societies

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<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of General Conference*—Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, 1889—Sept. 25, Oct. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Record of Baptist Congress*—1905.

<sup>3</sup> *Digest of Conference Law*, 1892 (25th Session).

to transfer their funds and merge their interests into and with the General Conference.<sup>4</sup>

General Conference polity was made by a conference board consisting of 21 members, chosen by ballot from persons in good standing in the denomination, who may or may not be members of the conference. One-third of the number must be women. This board had power to "choose all needful officers, adopt all rules needful for its own government, and to carry out the plans and undertakings of the conference; make contracts, employ agents, authorize the execution of legal papers, collect and appropriate funds, and exercise all the powers and functions of General Conference not in conflict with its rules, regulations, and directions . . ."<sup>5</sup>

While this board was required to report all its transactions to General Conference for final approval, it is to be remembered that the conference met regularly only once every three years, so that actually the majority of conference business was transacted by this board of 21 members. Thus, so much power was invested here that could not be properly controlled that before too many years the Board was in reality the conference and Baptist principles and practices became a stated fact rather than a practiced one.

When the merger plans became an important item on General Conference agenda, the actual details and arrangements were left to the conference board to work out and present to conference in regular session. This board recommended the election of a committee to meet with the Northern Baptist representatives and lay initial plans for the discussion between the two groups. In subsequent meetings, in almost every case, there were members of the board present in the committee meeting and by and large, it was their thinking that set the pace during the talks which ensued.

That there was a growing sense of compromise on the part of the Free Will Baptist leaders cannot be denied for the record bears out the fact that the idea of "alike-ness" between the Free Will Baptists and the Northern Baptists was rapidly taking hold. Rev. I. D. Stewart, one of the eminent Free Will Baptist historians, in pointing this out, wrote, "If the difference between the Free Will Baptist position and that of other Baptist groups had been no more pronounced in the beginning than it now is, there would never have been a Free Will Baptist denomination."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Minutes of General Conference, 1892, Lowell, Massachusetts (28th Session).*

<sup>6</sup> *History of Free Will Baptists, Volume 1.*

Professor Anthony, of Bates College, Lewiston, Maine, in making an impassioned plea for the merger before the General Conference declared that there was not enough difference doctrinally to practically warrant the existence of two bodies. He went on to say that there was so much in common between the two groups and that so much could be gained by both sides through the process of merger that it would be sinful not to follow through with such plans.

Joseph W. Mauck, president of Hillsdale College, in a paper setting forth the likeness in doctrine of the two groups which he read before the Baptist Congress in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1905, stated that Free Will Baptists could no longer claim that they were Arminian, inasmuch as a great portion of the ministers no longer held to this view, and that in the light of this fact, the last major barrier had been removed and that merger was both advisable and inevitable.<sup>7</sup>

The appeal from the Northern Baptist standpoint was based on a "stronger fellowship" idea and was full of alluring promises and suggestions. One of their leaders deplored the fact that the early Baptists had stood on such untenable grounds as unqualified predestination and the evils which accompanied such doctrine, and praised the Free Will Baptists very highly for having come out from such teachings in favor of a universal gospel. He then went on to point out the grounds which presently existed for fellowship and understanding, as well as the strong likeness in doctrines which existed, and suggested that if the two groups would pool their resources of membership and money, they would be in a position to win the world to the Baptist movement.

Another Northern Baptist champion, when faced with the fact that there were still some of the Free Will Baptists who believed in the possibility of apostacy as opposed to the "eternal security" of the Northern Baptist doctrine, proposed that no line should be drawn here. Each individual was to believe and preach as he chose in regards to this matter and Free Will Baptist churches, under no circumstances, would be censored nor molested if they wanted to continue this practice.

One leader even proposed that Free Will Baptist churches be permitted to retain the name "Free" or "Freewill" if they so desired. However, the Free Will Baptist leaders objected to this, holding that any merger arrangements should be binding and final, and that all

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<sup>7</sup> *Record of Baptist Congress of 1905.*



concerned should carry the same name and advocate the same doctrines.

After considerable exploratory work, during which time both the technical and legal angles of the matter of merger were discussed and planned, a resolution was presented to General Conference in session at Cleveland, Ohio, in October, 1907, containing the articles of the merger and urging the General Conference to vote in favor. However, two items in the articles came under heavy fire from the opposition, made up of representatives from Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Nebraska, Texas, and Oklahoma.

They were:

(1)—That all doctrinal differences be settled by taking the literal teachings of the scriptures as interpreted by the merged body.

(2)—That all monies in the various General Conference accounts as well as all denominational property, be turned over at once to the treasurer of the merged group.

A straw vote at this conference showed a majority of General Conference to be opposed to the merger, and had the issue been decided then and there, it would have been soundly defeated. However, the matter was given to the constituent yearly meetings and associations, to be decided on by vote in the various associations, and the final result to be tabulated three years hence, in 1910. Evidently this was a shrewd maneuver to assure passage, for the northeastern states were strongly in the majority and were solidly in favor of the merger.

In July, 1910, at Old Orchard, Maine, the matter came up for official vote. There was a hot floor fight on the question, with the western delegation protesting all the way. Their champions were Rev. T. C. Ferguson, of Missouri (who is yet living), Rev. John H. Wolfe and Rev. Morris of Nebraska, and Rev. Maywhorter, of Indiana.

Ferguson was vigorously outspoken and objected to the manner in which the matter was being decided. He raised the question as to whether the General Conference had a right to take funds which had been gathered for a Free Will Baptist program and give them over to any other group. He was answered by Professor Anthony, who said, "Away with the old dead hand of the past. We are looking for a new day."

Maywhorter and Wolfe objected to an organic union which would completely remove the Free Will Baptist identity and purpose, whereupon they were assured by Rev. Mauck that "this is not to be an



organic union, but merely a fellowship arrangement for the mutual benefit of both denominations." The battle continued for two days before the resolution of merger could be brought up for vote. When it finally came and votes were in from the yearly meetings and associations, it was carried by an overwhelming majority.

According to the Clerk's record of the vote on the floor, Ferguson of Missouri, was the lone dissenter. The others, realizing that their cause was lost, simply refused to be counted either way. Said Rev. John H. Wolfe, "We knew they were going to hang us, so we were not concerned about the kind of rope they used."

The merger could not become completely effective immediately, due to legal procedure which had to be observed, so a called meeting of General Conference met in October, 1911, to authorize certain matters. The records from the minutes of the last session of General Conference, October 22-23, 1817, sum up the actual process of the merger thus:

"After three years of discussion and preparation, in October 1911, the two peoples took decisive steps toward combining as one denomination. The General Conference of Free Will Baptists, on October 5, 1911, actually turned over to the Baptist societies—the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and the American Baptist Home Mission Society—the funds, functions, properties, and powers, then in condition for transfer, previously belonging to the General Conference of Free Will Baptists, and these societies became the agents for Free Will Baptists for the prosecution of home and foreign mission work. Since 1911, the action thus begun has been continued. Property and funds have been further turned over as fast and as far as legal and ecclesiastical consideration permitted; and in the different states the movement toward union and consolidation has been taken up and carried on, bringing state organizations, and the funds and functions of the two peoples within the states into one common state organization . . . ”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Minutes of 36th General Conference of Free Baptists*—p. 63.

## CHAPTER XIX

### RECOVERY AND REUNION

The merger of the northern Free Will Baptists and the Northern Baptists almost wrote "finis" to the Free Will Baptist cause in the north and northeast. The record shows that more than 1,100 churches with a combined membership strength of 100,000 were directly affected by the action, and that of this number at least 600 churches and 58,000 members were irretrievably lost from the Free Will Baptist movement.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the loss of constituency, there was a considerable loss of funds and property. The minutes of the 1917 meeting of the General Conference show that \$180,000 in home mission funds and \$250,000 in foreign mission funds were channeled into the American Baptist Home and Foreign Mission Society. All Free Will Baptist property in India was taken over by this joint Society as was extensive home mission property.

Seven major colleges and Bible institutes also went to a joint Educational Board, eventually to be lost entirely to the Northern Baptists. Among them were Bates, of Maine; Hillsdale, of Michigan, and Rio Grande, of Ohio, not to mention several smaller institutions.

Local church property was surrendered in a wholesale manner to the merged body, later to become the legal holdings of Northern Baptists. This came about largely through an arrangement insisted upon by the General Conference in 1892 and again in 1895 when, by conference vote, the local churches were instructed to deed all property to the district or state association to which they belonged.<sup>2</sup>

Thus a church in the Susquehannah Yearly Meeting of New York deeded its property to "The Susquehannah Yearly Meeting of Free Will Baptists, and (or) its successors and assigns, forever." This process was repeated in almost every one of the constituent bodies of the General Conference and on the strength of such provisions the churches became the property of the merged group. Today the American Baptist Convention is still busily engaged in taking up these deeds and claiming the property regardless of the wishes and desires of the local congregation.

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<sup>1</sup> *Yearbook of Free Will Baptists*, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Digest of General Conference Law*.

While visiting in northeastern Maine in 1953 I had occasion to examine the deed to the Free Will Baptist church in Deyer Brook, Maine. The "successors and assigns" clause was included and the United Baptist Convention of that state was pressing its claim for the property. I also had access to the minutes of the church which showed that in 1932 the congregation voted unanimously not to affiliate with the convention and the action was reaffirmed in 1934. In spite of this, however, the property was to be taken from the local group and given to the Convention.

And so the process was repeated over and over again. The people protested vigorously and numbers of them withdrew from the affected churches and joined other groups. Other Baptist denominations moved in and gleaned these dissatisfied members and organized them into Regular Baptist and Conservative Baptist churches. Free Will Baptists began to lose their identity, so that today there are but a few of them remaining. Only recently has any effort been made to move in and reclaim them for our cause.

In a previous article it was pointed out that the southern Free Will Baptists were not a part of the General Conference in the north. The real cleavage had come in the 1850s over the slavery question. Sometime near the close of the 1800s a General Conference was organized in the south, consisting of churches from North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Tennessee. This conference succeeded in holding the work in the south intact and prevented the merger from seriously affecting the churches there.

Soon after the turn of the twentieth century, Dr. Peden came into the leadership of the Southern Conference and for several years his ability and ingenuity served to keep it in good shape. However, the interest among the churches began to lag and Dr. Peden, being now an elderly man, became unable to assume the demands of leadership. In 1911, the General Conference of the South met for what proved to be its final session in Florence, Alabama.

It was at this meeting that Dr. Peden delivered his farewell address and stepped down from the helm, having flung the torch of generalship to younger and steadier hands. But the hands to which it was thrown did not receive the challenge and no one was found to "stand in the gap." Thus, the Southern Conference died and for several years there was no cooperative movement among the southern groups.

Conditions in the west and southwest were even worse than in the south. Many of the churches in the area had been affiliated with

the General Conference and a legal battle to retain their property now ensued. Supreme court decisions in Nebraska, Kansas, Illinois, and Texas gave the local church property to the merged groups, leaving the Free Will Baptists destitute and homeless.

Their ranks thus shattered, the people were scattered and practically all semblance of denominationalism disappeared. Some groups remained intact despite their property losses, among them the Nebraska Yearly Meeting and the Missouri state association. Groups were also alive in Oklahoma, North Texas, and Arkansas, as well as in the tri-state area of Kentucky, West Virginia, and Ohio.

In Nebraska were two mighty men of faith who loved the Free Will Baptist cause and who had bitterly opposed the merger. These men, Reverends John H. Wolfe and G. S. Lattimer, in conversation one day began to think of ways by which western Free Will Baptists might be drawn back together. In the summer of 1916 they visited the Missouri state association and talked with some of the leaders there. The outcome of these conferences was a decision to call all western Free Will Baptists for a conference later in the year to propose the organization of a General Conference of the West.

On December 28, 1916, representatives from Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, and North Carolina met at Philadelphia church, near Pattonsburg, Mo., to discuss the proposed organization. Much enthusiasm was manifested and soon it was decided to perfect the organization then and there. Officers elected were John H. Wolfe, moderator; Ira Waterman, clerk; D. E. Mann, treasurer, and Samra Smith, general secretary.

The name chosen was "Cooperative General Association of Free Will Baptists." The session continued for three days and was climaxed on December 31 in a "glorious spirit of revival."<sup>8</sup>

The Cooperative Association was set to hold regular meetings tri-annually, but conditions warranted a called meeting the following year. So on Wednesday, December 26, 1917, the association met at the Tecumseh Free Will Baptist College, Tecumseh, Okla., in an adjourned session from the first tri-annual association. At this meeting the Rev. J. F. Duckworth of Missouri read a lesson from Psalm 103 and prayer was offered by the Rev. Mrs. Lizzie McAdams of Oklahoma. A Divine Service committee composed of Reverends Samra Smith and H. M. McAdams of Oklahoma and Deacon J. D. Fowler of Missouri was appointed.

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<sup>8</sup> *Minutes of First Cooperative General Association, 1916.*



The first order of business on Thursday morning, December 27, was the reading of petitionary letters from the following associations: Washita of Oklahoma, Hopewell of Oklahoma, Center of Oklahoma, First of Oklahoma, Tri-State of Kentucky, West Virginia, and Southern Ohio, and West Fork of Texas. All of these associations were received and the delegates seated.

On Thursday afternoon a Committee on Business was appointed on which were named Reverends S. L. Morris, Oklahoma; H. B. Conley, Kentucky, and R. F. Pittman, North Carolina. On Saturday this committee gave a partial report embracing the following resolutions:

1.) An expression of thanks to Brother William Fuller of Elm Creek, Neb., for a \$500 gift to Tecumseh College toward an endowment of the chair to be known as the Fuller Professorship of Systematic Theology.

2.) A recommendation that the Cooperative General Association raise an additional endowment fund of \$20,000.

3.) A Free Will Baptist song book was to be printed, with Rev. Samra Smith named as editor.

4.) Reverends H. M. and Lizzie McAdams were endorsed as missionaries to the Barbados Islands to be supported by the association. In this connection it may be stated that a Miss Esterbrook had been in the Barbados for several years as a missionary under the sponsorship of Nebraska and Kansas Free Will Baptists.

Events of earth-shaking importance were taking place at the time of this meeting and the association recognized them in two resolutions adopted by the body on Saturday afternoon. They are presented herewith exactly as recorded in the minutes of the session.

"In view of the fact that our national Congress has passed a resolution submitting to the several states of our union for their ratification an amendment to the Federal Constitution for nationwide prohibition, therefore be it

"Resolved, That we, the Cooperative General Association of Free Will Baptists, representing 300,000 members in many states of our union, heartily endorse this proposed amendment and pledge our earnest support to secure its ratification."<sup>4</sup>

World War I was raging at this time and General Allenby and his forces had just occupied Jerusalem and Palestine, having taken it

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<sup>4</sup> *Minutes of First Adjourned Session, 1917, p. 8.*

from the Turkish forces. The body, in view of the recent victory, adopted the following resolution:

"In view of the fact that Jerusalem, a city in Palestine where Jesus did His mighty works and planted Christianity, also the place of His crucifixion and resurrection, and where He gave the great commission that we are under today, it having been in the hands of the Turks for over 400 years, these same Turks deny and ignore the principles taught by the Son of God, but Jerusalem is now in the hands of a people who love and reverence the Christ, our Saviour, and His teachings, therefore be it

"Resolved, That this body use its influence, in whatever way may seem best, to prohibit Jerusalem and the land of Palestine from reverting back to the Turks, or any other heathen nation; also that the same influence be used to stop the slaughter and persecution of the Armenians."<sup>5</sup>

The real purpose for calling the 1917 session of the association was to consider officially an offer which had been made in regards to property for a college. The 1916 session in Missouri had voted to establish such an institution and had charged an educational committee with the responsibility of locating a site and perfecting purchase plans.

Through the efforts of Reverends J. E. Bean, W. A. Dearmore, H. M. and Lizzie McAdams, all of Oklahoma, and others, the city of Tecumseh was ready to make an offer. On January 12, 1917, a meeting was held with the business men of Tecumseh, headed by Mr. E. L. Rosebush, president of the Tecumseh National Bank. They offered to the Free Will Baptist group for denominational college purposes, the Indianola Business College property, with five acres of ground having a three-story brick building, 40 by 60, and a frame building, 30 by 40. This property, along with a cash consideration of \$1,000 was given as an outright gift to the denomination.

Mr. Wolfe was chosen president and he moved to Tecumseh soon thereafter and made plans to open the school. They observed opening day on August 6, 1917, and the school was opened to students on September 12 of that same year.<sup>6</sup>

The faculty for the first session consisted of Rev. John H. Wolfe, president and head of Department of Theology, Philosophy, and Fuller Professorship of Systematic Theology; Rev. S. L. Morris, secre-

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

tary and lecturer in Department of Sacred History and Apologetics; Mrs. Delia S. Wolfe, Department of History and Languages; Mrs. Grace I. Morris, Department of Mathematics and Physics; Mrs. Pearl K. Smith, Dean of Women and head of preparatory school, and Rev. Samra Smith, Department of Chemistry and Biology and Department of Expression.

In presenting his report to the association, Mr. Wolfe closed by saying, "Our policy stated before has been and is, 'No debts to be made,' so that all that has been done comes before you for your approval without one dollar of indebtedness upon it."

The denominational organ adopted by the Cooperative Association was named *The New Morning Star*, and in December, 1916, was set up in Weatherford, Texas, with Rev. S. L. Morris as editor and an initial circulation of 500. From the report of the editor to the association in 1917, the following is taken: "The subscription list (500) has grown until it has almost doubled itself during the past year . . . Rev. Samra Smith, editor of the *Biblical Beacon* came with the proposition of consolidation . . . and placed at the disposal of the denomination his entire office fixtures, without money and without price . . . Then comes Brother W. C. Austin, editor of the *Pruning Hook*, with suggestion of consolidation and willingly turns his subscription list to the *Star*, making one paper of the three."<sup>7</sup>

The body adopted the report and voted to approve the relocating of the *New Morning Star* from Weatherford to Tecumseh.

One of the highlights of the 1917 session was the dedication of the college property in Tecumseh in a special service on Sunday morning, December 30. The service, as recorded in the minutes, proceeded thus:

"Rev. John H. Wolf, president of Tecumseh College, presented to Rev. C. E. Mann of Missouri, treasurer and custodian of all legal papers of this association, the deed and abstract of the college property showing no indebtedness. Mr. Mann responded with proper words of thanks to the people of Tecumseh for their gift and then led in prayer.

"Rev. Ira Waterman read scripture lesson from II Chronicles 6: 12-22.

"At 11 o'clock, Rev. Robert F. Pittman of North Carolina was presented and preached the dedicatory sermon . . .

"At the close of the sermon, Rev. Samra Smith offered the prayer

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

of dedication after which the congregation sang 'Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow'."

Thus the conference adjourned to meet in Paintsville, Ky., on Wednesday, December 25, 1918.

So in this manner the scattered remnants of Free Will Baptists slowly began to come back together.



## CHAPTER XX

### A DENOMINATION REBORN

For a period of four years, the General Cooperative Association was the only organization within Free Will Baptist ranks that could qualify in any sense of the word as a unifying agency. The General Conference in the north was dissolved by the merger at about the same time that Dr. Peden's incapacity marked the end of the General Conference of the south. The Cooperative Association, organized in December, 1916, was the one organization that served to keep the states comprising the denomination in touch with each other.

In 1918, December 25, the Cooperative Association met in Paintsville, Kentucky for its second adjourned session, the regular tri-annual meeting not being due until 1919. At this session, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, Ohio, and Illinois were represented. The key issue was that of settling on points of doctrine suitable to both groups. Among other things, the feet-washing question came up. A long and somewhat bitter discussion followed on whether or not the rite should be classified as a church ordinance.

The representatives from the east wanted to make it an ordinance of the church, while sentiment in the west was for leaving it an open question, allowing the local churches to observe it or not, as they were led of the Lord. When the vote was taken, the association went on record as leaving the matter to be decided on by local groups. Thus, the 1918 session ended on a note of disagreement when North Carolina and Tennessee withdrew because of the stand taken on feet-washing.

Sentiment had been growing in the east for a reviving of the General Conference and the events which led to the withdrawal of the leading states in that area sparked a new and more intense desire for such a move. Accordingly, at the session of the state association of North Carolina in 1920, which was held at Rain's Cross Roads church, near Kenly, some of the Tennessee and North Carolina brethren arranged for a meeting to be held the following spring to reorganize the General Conference of the East.

Nashville, Tennessee, was the site of this meeting, which convened with Cofer's Chapel church on May 26, 27, 28, 1921. Representatives gathered from Ohio, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee and in a short while agreed to perfect the organization. The

Rev. J. L. Welch, of Nashville, was elected as president of the body, with Rev. D. W. Alexander, of North Carolina, as vice-president. Rev. E. C. Morris, North Carolina, was named recording secretary, Rev. J. E. Hodgins, Alabama, treasurer, and Rev. Neal Parrish, of Georgia, was chosen as field secretary.

One of the important items of business was the appointing of a committee to draw up a Constitution and By-Laws for the conference. The committee appointed was: J. C. Moye, J. W. Alford, N. H. Parrish, J. E. Hodgins, and G. W. Fambrough. The committee began its work at once and made a partial report before the meeting adjourned, resulting in the adoption of a Constitution and By-Laws for governing the conference.

An incident of historical importance which took place at the North Carolina state convention in 1920 should be recorded here. In the early days of the Free Will Baptist movement, there was no youth movement of any kind. Under the sponsorship of the General Conference of the north, the denomination's youth were organized into the Advocates of Christian Fidelity. This was the name under which they operated until the conference was merged with the Northern Baptists. In North Carolina there was a Free Will Baptist youth group known as the Mutual Endeavor Union.

Prior to the state convention in 1920, a youth group in Cofer's Chapel church, Nashville, Tennessee had been named by Rev. and Mrs. J. L. Welch, the "Free Will Baptist League." So far as any records show, this group was the first ever to bear the name, "Free Will Baptist League," prior youth groups having been known as ACF and MEU. Mr. Welch introduced the new name at the state convention and pointed out that this title, FWBL, identified this movement with the denomination. It was so well received that Mrs. Alice Lupton and others present agreed to adopt it as the name for the North Carolina group, dropping the title, "Mutual Endeavor Union."

When the General Conference (the name chosen by the new group) met in Marshall, North Carolina, May 25-27, 1922, the name, "Free Will Baptist League," was adopted as the official title for the denominational youth movement, after J. E. Hudgens of Tennessee, and Mrs. Alice Lupton and L. E. Ballard of North Carolina had spoken in behalf of the young people. Rev. L. E. Ballard was elected president of the new movement and associate editor of the League literature. Rev. J. L. Welch was named editor of the literature with Mrs. Alice Lupton as assistant.

The 1922 session was not so largely attended, but several important items of business were taken up and passed. Among these was a resolution declaring the doctrinal position of the Conference. It was voted "to sustain and defend the doctrines and ordinances of the Original Free Will Baptists, unmodified, and to go to the defense of any individual or group of individuals who were called in question or in any way jeopardized by his holding to or practicing said doctrines or ordinances."<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of two works of grace or second-blessing sanctification was rife at this time, and the accompanying movement was invading many of the eastern churches and threatening to split them or lead them away from their Free Will Baptist affiliation. Accordingly, this matter was dealt with and the churches were warned of the consequences of having any part of it.

At the close of the session, an Executive Committee was elected, consisting of: J. W. Alford, North Carolina, 5 years; N. H. Parrish, Georgia, 4 years; D. T. Armstrong, Tennessee, 3 years; M. B. Hutchinson, Ohio, 2 years; and J. E. Hodgins, Alabama, 1 year. Records of the subsequent meetings of the conference indicate progress in every department and rapid growth in every phase of the work.

Thus, Free Will Baptists were now divided into two camps; the General Cooperative Association of the west and the Eastern General Conference of the east. While these two bodies were separate organizations, they had the same background and worked for like interests. And so it was natural that in the course of time they should begin to think and talk in terms of cooperation and organic union. As early as 1924, representatives were visiting back and forth, and by 1930 it was not uncommon for representative brethren to be present in almost every meeting.

The common losses and needs of the two groups were bringing them closer together than they themselves realized. In 1927, Tecumseh College had been lost by fire, so that there was no Free Will Baptist educational institution in the west. The east had suffered the loss of the school and seminary in Ayden, North Carolina, so that they, too, were without educational facilities. Both groups realized here a deep need and also that the need could well be met unitedly.

The missionary vision began to clamor for recognition. The General

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<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of General Conference—1922.*



Conference in its 1930 session at Vernon, Alabama, elected Rev. I. J. Blackwelder as foreign missions secretary and it was at this session that Rev. Henry Melvin received the first missionary offering in the history of our modern missionary movement. Then in June 1935, at Black Jack Church, Pitt County, North Carolina, the General Conference put its blessings on two Free Will Baptist missionaries, Laura Belle Barnard and Bessie Yeley. An excerpt from the minutes of that meeting reads: "Miss Laura Belle Barnard, of Glennville, Georgia, is now ready to sail for India under the auspices of the International Union Mission. She will be stationed in the Queen's Hill Missionary Rest Home, in Kotagiri, South India.

"Miss Bessie Yeley, of Ohio, we understand, has recently sailed for Venezuela; however, she sailed independent of the General Conference . . . "

Exploratory talks regarding a merger of the Eastern General Conference and the General Cooperative Association soon became planning sessions. It seemed that the people realized as never before the need of cooperation and unity, so that soon the idea of uniting the two groups was in everybody's mind. Both organizations appointed committees to further the talks and to explore thoroughly any and all possibilities for uniting the groups. The two committees worked untiringly, and in June, 1933, made the first report of their work and offered the following agreement:

Nashville, Tennessee, June 14-16, 1933

We, the joint committee of the General Conference and the Cooperative Association agree to the following.

We agree to accept the Articles of Faith of the 1901 Treatise, also the Church Covenant contained in the same Treatise, together with all the forms and usages set forth in the same, with such amendments as may be made and approved by the body when perfected into one organization.

We heartily agree to the merging of the General Conference and Cooperative General Association into one body, and we urge that steps be taken immediately for the final consummation of such union.<sup>2</sup>

Signed:

REV. J. W. ALFORD *for the General Conference*

REV. B. F. BROWN *for the Cooperative Association.*

At this session of the General Conference, a committee was appointed to meet with a committee of the Cooperative Association in Denison, Texas to make further plans for the merger. The Committee consisting of Revs. J. L. Welch, E. C. Morris, I. J. Blackwelder, and K. V. Shutes, was to meet the committee of the Cooperative Association in Denison, Texas, November 6-9, 1934,

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of 13th Annual Session General Conference of Original F. W. B. U. S. A.*



during the regular session of the Cooperative Association. Plans were made accordingly and on Tuesday evening November 6, 1934, the association was called to order and on November 8, the two committees met in joint conference. Their report, as given on pages 6 and 7 of the minutes of the Seventh Tri-ennial Session of the General Cooperative Association of Free Will Baptists, is as follows:

Denison, Texas, November 8, 1934

The committees representing the General Conference and the Cooperative General Association met in a joint session during the sitting of the Cooperative General Association, Denison, Texas, November 8, 1934, and continued the work of uniting the above named bodies as follows:

1) In addition to the terms agreed upon in Nashville, Tennessee, on June 15, 1933, we, the committees representing the Cooperative General Association and the General Conference, agree to unite the above named bodies into one national body to be known as the National Association of Free Will Baptists, with the understanding that the two bodies thus united continue to operate under their present organization without becoming in any way responsible for each other's present obligations, and with the understanding that neither of the two shall in any way have jurisdiction over the other, but at the same time they are to continue their work as part of the national body.

2) That the National Association of Free Will Baptists meet in its first session in the East Nashville church, Nashville, Tennessee, on Tuesday night after the first Sunday in November, 1935.

3) That Rev. J. L. Welch act as temporary moderator and Rev. Winford Davis as assistant moderator of the first session of this national body.

4) That the moderator and assistant moderator act as a program committee for the first session.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cooperative Association Committee:*

J. L. WALTMAN, NOEL TURNER, BERT F. ROGERS, F. S. VAN HOOSE,  
SELPH JONES.

*General Conference Committee:*

J. L. WELCH, E. C. MORRIS, I. J. BLACKWELDER, K. V. SHUTES.

It is further a matter of record in the same minutes that the Cooperative Association committee which represented that association in Nashville in June, 1934, agreed to accept the Articles of Faith of the 1901 Treatise and the Church Covenant of the 1901 or 1916 Treatise as the basis of agreement.

Both bodies having now settled on a basis of agreement and having set the time for a meeting together, nothing further remained to be done until the proposed meeting in November, 1935. In the meantime, the General Conference in session at Black Jack church, Pitt county, North Carolina, went on record as enthusiastically approving

the merger plans and the coming meeting in Nashville was highly publicized. A delegation from the Cooperative Association was present at this meeting and was accorded a warm welcome. A spirit of revival pervaded this meeting which was attended by several hundred people, and it closed on a high spiritual tone, looking toward the soon-coming meeting in Nashville.

As the time drew near for the November gathering, East Nashville church had a change in pastors, and supply men were filling the pulpit until a regular pastor could be secured. Fearing that they would not be able to properly care for the meeting under such circumstances, East Nashville church asked to be relieved of the responsibility, and her request was granted. Cofer's Chapel church agreed to take the meeting and plans were arranged for the initial gathering of the representatives from the east and the west.

At last the long-looked-for day came and the delegates and ministers began to arrive in Nashville, Tennessee, for what was to become the outstanding historical event in Free Will Baptist history. For an accurate description of the occasion, let us turn to the minutes of that meeting.

"At 7:30 o'clock Tuesday evening, November 5, 1935, in Cofer's Chapel church, Nashville, Tennessee, the National Association of Free Will Baptists convened in its first session. After a lively devotional service of songs and prayer led by Rev. R. N. Hinnant, of Micro, North Carolina, Rev. Winford Davis, of Monett, Missouri, brought a splendid Gospel message to the large congregation of anxious delegates and visitors . . ."

"At 10:30 o'clock Wednesday morning a rather large number of delegates and visitors met at the church for worship, the organization of the association having been postponed in order that all the expected delegates may have part in the organization . . .

"At 1:30 o'clock Wednesday afternoon the people reassembled and after appropriate devotions, the business of the association was begun. Rev. I. J. Blackwelder was made secretary pro tem, and the following delegates were recognized:

#### ALABAMA:

State Line Conference—Revs. M. L. Hollis, Joe Fort, J. H. Haas.

State Line Association—Revs. A. H. Godfrey, Floyd Cherry.

Progressive Association—Rev. Jesse W. Pike, Mr. P. A. Crawford.

Southeastern Association—Rev. D. F. Pelt.

Mount Moriah—Two representatives who did not register.

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\* *Minutes, First Session of National Association, Nashville, Tennessee, November 5-7, 1935*—page 1.

*NORTH CAROLINA:*

State Convention—Rev. J. A. Evans, P. A. Boyette.  
 Western Conference—Revs. S. H. Styron, R. N. Hinnant.  
 Eastern Conference—Rev. J. W. Alford.  
 Cape Fear Conference—Rev. J. C. Griffin, W. A. Jackson.

*GEORGIA:*

Midway Association—A. D. Ivey, James Cheshire.  
 South Georgia Association—Rev. E. B. Joyner, S. A. Brooten, Jr.

*MISSISSIPPI:*

Northeast Association—H. E. Post, W. J. Hill.

*OKLAHOMA:*

State Association—Revs. B. F. Rogers, E. E. Morris, E. A. O'Donnell, Will Carter.  
 Dibble Association—Rev. Clay Richey.

*MISSOURI:*

State Association—Daisy Marcum, Belva Zinn, Mr. and Mrs. Will Pirtle, Eunice Miller.

*TEXAS:*

State Convention—C. F. Goen, Rev. E. Sterl Phinney.  
 Central Texas Association—Revs. J. L. Bounds, C. B. Thompson.

*NEBRASKA:*

Nebraska and Kansas Yearly Meeting—M. L. Morse.

*TENNESSEE:*

Cumberland Association—G. W. Fambrough, Rev. J. E. Hudgens.

*KENTUCKY:*

Tri-State Association—Rev. M. F. Van Hoose.

*WEST VIRGINIA:*

Tri-State Association—Rev. W. I. Marlow.

*ARKANSAS:*

Rev. L. C. Doyle, Ralph Staten, and A. T. Blanks were visitors of the State Conference of Arkansas.

There were several laymen and visitors present for the meeting and approximately 60 Free Will Baptist ministers were registered.

The first item of business was the election of officers. Rev. J. L. Welch of Nashville, Tennessee was chosen moderator with Rev. Winford Davis, of Missouri as assistant. Revs. I. J. Blackwelder of Tennessee and Bert Rogers, of Oklahoma, were named secretary-treasurer and assistant secretary-treasurer, respectively. To expedite further transactions, the committees were appointed by the moderator and instructed in their duties. A committee on Constitution and By-Laws

was headed by Rev. Henry Melvin. The other members were Rev. E. S. Phinney, Rev. M. L. Hollis, Rev. L. C. Doyle (advisory) Mr. A. D. Ivey, Rev. E. A. O'Donnell, Rev. J. E. Hudgens, Rev. J. M. Haas, and Rev. B. F. Brown.

It was necessary to appoint a Treatise Revision Committee, inasmuch as there were certain matters to clear up on the basis of the merger agreement on which the two groups had been working. This committee was an important one since its work could make or break the proposed National Association. Rev. J. C. Griffin was named chairman, with Rev. C. B. Thompson, M. L. Morse, Rev. W. B. Davenport, H. E. Post, Rev. E. E. Morris, Rev. Ralph Staten (advisory) Rev. E. B. Joyner, Rev. M. F. Van Hoose, Rev. Winford Davis, and Rev. J. S. Frederick as members.

A program committee consisting of the general officers, and a publicity committee made up of Revs. E. C. Morris, Thomas Willey, and Melvin Bingham completed the list of committees.

This first meeting was marked by a missionary spirit. On Wednesday evening the service was in charge of Rev. Thomas H. Willey, of Durham, North Carolina, who spoke on the subject, "Foreign Mission Work in South America." After the message, the first foreign mission offering ever to be received by the National Association of Free Will Baptists was given. It amounted to exactly \$75.

For several years prior to this meeting, a joint Education Committee had been working together for the purpose of establishing a Free Will Baptist school. This committee consisted of J. L. Welch and T. B. Mellette, of the Eastern General Conference, and Melvin Bingham, E. E. Morris, and Selph Jones of the Cooperative Association. The Committee made a report at this first National Association, and proposed the following:

- 1) That Nashville, Tennessee be accepted as the location for our Bible School.
- 2) That we begin school work in September, 1936.
- 3) That a campaign be launched at once for funds to finance the undertaking.
- 4) That we begin our school work on a small scale, confining the work to a Bible course and add other courses to the same as the Lord prospers us.
- 5) That this body elect a Board of Trustees to acquire and hold title to any and all property of said school for and in the name of this National Association.



When this report was given, it was unanimously accepted. Rev. J. L. Welch was elected Secretary of Education of the National Association of Free Will Baptists. Five school trustees were elected:

Rev. Selph Jones, Chairman, Mansfield, Mo.

Rev. Henry Melvin, Durham, N. C.

Rev. J. C. Griffin, New Bern, N. C.

Rev. M. F. Van Hoose, Paintsville, Ky.

Rev. E. A. O'Donnell, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Thus began the first National Association effort at establishing a school for training men and women for Christian service in the Free Will Baptist denomination. Although the 1936 date did not see the plans in operation, this move did result in a surge forward along those lines, and the realization of this ambition was to come just six years later.

The foreign mission work was taken up by the body and approved as it then stood. Rev. I. J. Blackwelder was elected Secretary of Foreign Missions, a position he had held in the General Conference since 1930. Miss Laura Belle Barnard and Miss Bessie Yeley were registered as Free Will Baptist missionaries, and Miss Barnard's salary of \$50 monthly was being paid by the General Conference. Mr. Paul, a native Indian, had been receiving a small stipend from the General Conference since 1931. Rev. and Mrs. Thomas H. Willey were also being considered by the Foreign Mission Board as missionaries to Panama or South America.

The highlight of this first session of the National Association came when the committee on treatise revision was called on to report. As was pointed out on another page, this was to be the deciding factor in the formation of the new group, and much prayer had gone up in behalf of this committee. When the moderator called for the reading of this important report, Rev. Mrs. Lizzie McAdams offered a motion that the report be accepted without a public reading. The motion met with an immediate second and the vote was overwhelmingly unanimous.

This meant that the National Association of Free Will Baptists was now an official reality and that at last, Free Will Baptists were united in a common cause. The entire congregation was caught in the spirit of the momentous occasion. Strong men embraced each other and wept tears of joy and victory. The shouts of rejoicing Christians were lifted in praise to God.

At last someone started an old hymn, the vast congregation joined in, an old-fashioned handshake ensued, and amidst such rejoicing and praising the Lord, the Holy Spirit's stamp of approval was placed upon that transaction which made "them no longer twain, but one." This item was adopted on Thursday morning, November 7, at approximately 10:15 o'clock.

As this great Free Will Baptist work was being born, one of the greatest of modern evangelists was being called home to his reward. From page seven of the minutes, the following is quoted: "Having heard of the death of Billy Sunday, the association stood in a moment of silent prayer, in recognition of the passing of a great gospel evangelist. Rev. J. L. Welch was asked by the association to send a telegram of condolence to Mrs. Sunday."

The final service of the association was held Thursday afternoon. Rev. S. T. Shutes, of Blakely, Georgia, conducted the devotional service and the sermon was delivered by Rev. C. B. Thompson, of Bryan, Texas. The association was adjourned to meet again in three years at a place to be designated by the Executive Board. This board consisted of Rev. J. W. Alford, North Carolina, chairman; Rev. B. F. Brown, Missouri, secretary; Rev. E. B. Joyner, Florida; Mr. C. F. Goen, Texas; Rev. D. F. Pelt, Alabama.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE DENOMINATION AND FOREIGN MISSIONS

The fourth session of the National Association of Free Will Baptists met in Bryan, Texas, on July 11, 1939. Rev. J. F. Miller, of Flat River, Missouri, was moderator and Rev. E. C. Morris, Elizabeth City, North Carolina, was clerk. Twenty-two states and district associations were represented by 52 delegates and 51 ministers. A high note of optimism was sounded at this meeting and reports from each of the departments showed a tremendous increase over the previous year.

Inasmuch as the National Association had voted in the 1938 session to hold its meeting annually, some revisions to the constitution and by-laws had to be made. A revision committee consisting of Revs. George Dunbar, Tennessee; J. R. Bennett, North Carolina; I. J. Blackwelder, Tennessee; J. L. Waltman, Oklahoma; and O. T. Allred, Missouri, was appointed. They were instructed to "revise the constitution as the time may demand."

In this year the progress of the denomination was characterized by the growth and expansion of the Foreign Mission Department. Let us examine the report as adopted in Bryan, Texas by the National Association in session.<sup>1</sup>

"We, the National Board of Foreign Missions, prayerfully submit the following report and recommendations.

"In the first place, we wish to commend our people for the splendid support they have given the cause of foreign missions in the past, and we sincerely solicit their support in the future, especially for the next 12 months. That you may know what we have done for this cause for the past 8 months, the treasurer of the Board presents his report as follows: (*Writer's note: Only the totals are included in this work*):

Total Received .....	\$1,730.97
Balance brought forward .....	421.60
	<hr/>
	\$2,152.57

#### *Disbursements:*

Rev. T. H. Willey, Salary .....	\$ 800.00
Rev. T. H. Willey, Mission Week .....	179.43

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<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of Third Annual Session—National Association of Free Will Baptists.*  
pp. 8-10.

# Missionary Churches



This lovely church in Kotagiri, South India, was built at a cost of about \$2,000.



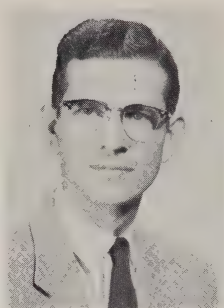
Students stand in front of the "temple" at the seminary in Pinar del Rio, Cuba.



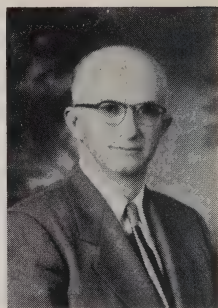
# Departmental Secretaries



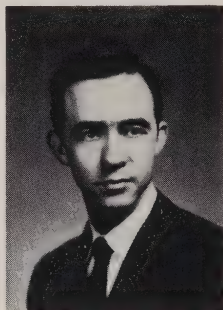
RAYMOND RIGGS  
*Foreign Missions*



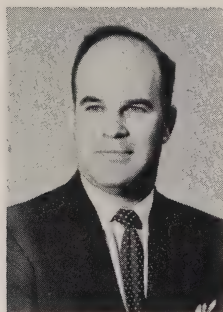
W. S. MOONEYHAM  
*Executive*



K. V. SHUTES  
*Superannuation*



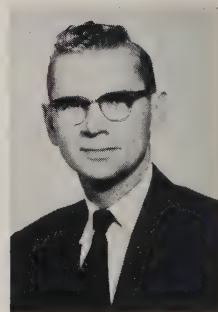
RAY TURNAGE  
*Free Will Baptist League*



DAMON C. DODD  
*Home Missions*



MRS. H. B. SLOAN  
*Woman's Auxiliary*



WILLIAM MISHLER  
*Sunday School*

Miss Laura Barnard, Salary .....	450.00
Miss Laura Barnard, gift .....	5.00
Rev. R. Paul, Salary .....	90.00
Miscellaneous expense .....	8.90
	<hr/>
	\$1,533.33

"In the next place, we offer five recommendations for your careful and prayerful consideration.

"First, we recommend the approval of the change of fields of labor of Brother and Sister Willey, namely, from Panama to Nicaragua. This change was made because of an intolerant government in Panama, which forced them to leave that country on the first of July. We further recommend that Bro. and Sis. Willey's salary and allowance for mission work in Nicaragua be continued in the amount of \$150 per month. Moreover, that we supply them with needed helpers as early as possible.

"Second, we recommend that we continue Miss Barnard's salary at \$50 per month. Also, we recommend the approval of Miss Barnard's efforts to establish a Free Will Baptist mission in India, and that we supply her with funds and helpers . . . as rapidly as possible.

"Third, we recommend that Miss Bessie Yeley be given \$250.00, \$200.00 of which is for transportation to Venezuela, and \$50 as salary for the first month on the field . . .

"Fourth, we recommend that the allowance of \$10 per month to Mr. Paul, a native missionary in India, be discontinued that our own missionaries may have all our support.

"Finally, we recommend the following foreign mission budget. North Carolina, \$1,200; Missouri, \$600; Tennessee, \$600; Texas, \$400; Ohio, \$300; Oklahoma, \$250; Virginia, \$100; Georgia, \$150; South Carolina, \$100; Alabama, \$100; Kentucky, \$50; Mississippi, \$50; Florida, \$50."

Prayerfully submitted,

REV. B. F. ROGERS, *Chairman*

REV. I. J. BLACKWELDER, *Sec.-Treas.*

REV. WINFORD DAVIS

CLYDE F. GOEN

MRS. J. R. BENNETT

With these proposals, the denomination's foreign mission program began to enlarge, and almost as if this had been the long-awaited signal, Free Will Baptist people began to lift their heads and read the signs. Missions became the fulcrum by which the denomination was to be pried from lethargy and indifference. Four missionaries were the responsibility of Free Will Baptists and they were challenging the people to put their best foot forward. While the total budget was very small in comparison to that of later years, it must be remembered that the increase percentage-wise was phenomenal, so that a budget of \$3,950 was a great undertaking for our people.

Foreign mission interests continued to grow and in 1940, receipts were reported as \$3,445.31, only a few dollars short of the goal of \$3,900. This year the budget was raised to \$4,200 and the board granted Miss Barnard a furlough from India. Rev. C. B. Thompson was elected to the board when Mrs. J. R. Bennett resigned.

At the session of the National Association, which convened in Drumright, Oklahoma, July 13-18, 1941, the Board of Foreign Missions reported that investigations were being made relative to sending Rev. and Mrs. Willey to Cuba if it was found impractical to use them in connection with the work in India. Five missionary candidates presented themselves for service and "were received by the Association with much rejoicing." Miss Barnard was authorized to take all necessary steps toward getting these candidates on the field. The foreign mission income was reported as being \$4,271.67 and a budget of \$4,200 was adopted for 1942.

In the meantime, before the next session of the association convened, the Willeys were sent to Cuba and there they found an outstanding opportunity for a great mission work. For awhile they worked with another missionary organization on the island, but when the time came, they went into the westernmost province of Cuba and opened a Free Will Baptist work in Pinar del Rio. Mrs. Willey attended the 1942 session in Columbus, Mississippi, and made urgent appeal for:<sup>2</sup>

1. A missionary couple from the U. S. to go to Cuba immediately . . .
2. Funds for erecting and equipping a mission station, including necessary buildings for the school.
3. An increase in the allowance . . . sufficient to cover salaries for eight Cuban workers already employed . . .
4. Five horses needed immediately for use by Cuban preachers who go long distances on evangelistic work.

At this meeting, Miss Laura Barnard was present, having been on furlough for some months. Her report on India was most favorable and the financial status there was set forth as very good. Miss Bessie Yeley was given a furlough from Venezuela and Rev. and Mrs. Damon C. Dodd appeared before the board to make known their intentions of going to the mission field. Rev. Paul Woolsey was authorized by the board to investigate some means by which our missionaries might gain passage and passport facilities to India in spite of war difficulties.

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of Sixth Annual Session of the National Association of Free Will Baptists.* pp. 23, 24.

The financial report revealed a total income of \$5,500 for foreign missions and a proposed budget of \$8,250 for the ensuing year.

The Cuban field was a rapidly expanding one and it occupied most of the attention and business of the board in the 1943 meeting at Nashville, Tennessee. Rev. Henry Melvin, executive secretary of the denomination had made a tour of the Cuban work in February, 1943, and his report, as well as that of Rev. and Mrs. Willey, laid great stress on the need of permanent Free Will Baptist property in Cuba and also the urgency of setting up a Bible training school there. The board recommended that a drive be started on a special fund of \$2,000 designed for the afore mentioned purposes. Miss Bessie Yeley, home on furlough from Venezuela, was transferred to Cuba, where she went in the spring so as to be there while the Willeys were in the states.

Miss Laura Barnard, who had been on furlough from India and had been unable to get back due to wartime hazards and restrictions, had just been informed by the State Department that her travel facilities had been granted. She was making all last-minute arrangements to depart at the earliest possible moment. Rev. H. M. Clay, a national of India, had been directing the work in India in Miss Barnard's absence.

At this meeting, the Foreign Mission Board adopted a constitution and by-laws which had been drawn up by Mr. Melvin. This was the first such regulations ever to be adopted by the board, and is included herewith for its historical value.

Preamble. Realizing that the supreme mission of the church is to win the lost to Christ, not only in the homeland, but throughout the world; we do ordain this constitution and by-laws for the guidance of the Board of Foreign Missions in the prosecution of the task of worldwide evangelism.

We shall desire to make the Lord Jesus Christ known to all peoples in all lands as their Divine Savior, to persuade them to become His disciples, and to gather these disciples into the Christian church.

#### ARTICLE I—NAME AND OBJECT

The name of this organization shall be the Board of Foreign Missions of the Free Will Baptist church in the U. S. A. Its objects are religious, philanthropic, and educational, designed to make Christ known as the Savior of men and to diffuse more generally the blessings of Christianity in every part of the world.

#### ARTICLE II—MEMBERSHIP

The Board of Foreign Missions of the Free Will Baptist church in the



U. S. A. shall be composed of those members elected by the National Association of Free Will Baptists in accordance with its constitution and by-laws.

#### ARTICLE III—AUTHORITY

The Board shall have the right to regulate its own proceedings in accordance with its constitution and by-laws, and the direction of the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

The Board shall ever be responsible and answerable for its acts to the National Association.

The Board shall have the right, to conduct a promotional campaign in the interest of missions through the borders of the church and to ask for special offerings at any time a definite need justifies the action.

The Board shall have the right to buy, acquire, receive by gifts, devise, and dispose of property; to secure, appropriate, and administer funds for its work; to sue and be sued, and to elect the necessary officers among its members for the proper execution of its work.

The Board shall have full oversight of all missionary activity of the Free Will Baptist church in every land it may propose to carry the Gospel.

The Board shall establish a standard course of training for all missionaries in accordance with the field they may propose to serve. The appointment of all missionaries shall be done by the approval of the National Association in regular session, and none shall be appointed without the recommendation of the Board.

The Board shall have the right to set the salary of the missionary in accordance with the responsibility incurred and the particular field in which he serves.

The Board shall have the right to recommend to the National Association new fields of labor; to accept, train, and maintain support of all work under its charge.

#### ARTICLE IV—SUPERVISION OF FIELDS

The Board shall have the right to designate a superintendent of missions in every field which the church may carry the Gospel. It is understood that the designated superintendent shall be furnished credentials setting forth this particular appointment and that all missionaries, both native and foreign, shall be under the direction of said superintendent.

The superintendent of missions in each field shall be answerable to the Board of Foreign Missions for the promotion of the work, the distribution of funds allotted, and the general program of the work.

The superintendent of missions shall, upon the action of the Board, have the right to act with the power of attorney for the Board of Foreign Missions in his particular field. The power of Attorney covering the right to buy and sell, hold title to property, both personal and real, or mixed, the right to buy and sell in the name of the Board of Foreign Missions of the National Association of Free Will Baptists in the U. S. A.

#### BY-LAWS

Section 1—Any part of this constitution and by-laws that may con-

flict with the constitution of the National Association of Free Will Baptists is hereby automatically repealed.

Section 2—This constitution and by-laws may be amended by a majority vote at any regular session of the National Association.

Financially, this year was the best ever recorded for the cause of foreign missions. Total gifts of \$8,781.71 were made, with Missouri and North Carolina pacing the states in total gifts. The budget for 1944 was set for \$12,550 and the states were assigned their quotas to raise.

In 1944, the National Association held its session in Flat River, Missouri, and the picture mission-wise was brighter than ever. Receipts had jumped to \$17,307.89, nearly doubling that of the previous year. In addition, the work on the mission fields was prospering and growing, all of which gave the necessary boost in morale needed by the denomination and its entire program. The Cuban school of missions had opened on January 4, 1944, with seven students, with Rafael Josué as principal. An 18-acre farm had been bought in Pinar del Rio Province, Cuba, for \$800 and the school and dormitories had been erected there. In addition to the school, Cuba reported five organized churches and 35 preaching points. The five churches reported a membership of 100, with seven deacons, seven Sunday schools, and three chapels.

Miss Laura Barnard had not been able to return to India due to wartime restrictions on travel and the work there was still under the supervision of Mr. H. M. Clay. She had completed writing a missionary study course book entitled *His Name Among All Nations* and the board was making plans to publish it as soon as possible.

The history-making event at this meeting was the adoption of a \$40,000 budget for 1945. This was by far the largest figure ever proposed and the National Association accepted the challenge wholeheartedly and eagerly.

By 1946 the work in the Foreign Mission department was moving along at an ever-increasing tempo. Miss Olive Van Syoc, who had been employed by the board as teacher for the missionary children, left Cuba to go back to the states to help care for her invalid mother. Rev. and Mrs. Damon C. Dodd, of Nashville, Tennessee, had gone to Cuba in October, 1945, and were serving in the capacity of teacher and bookkeeper and business manager of the Cuban mission. The work in Cuba was surging forward under the direction of Rev. Thomas H. Willey with new churches and preaching points being

opened every month. Twenty-two students were enrolled in the Cuban school in 1946, and with prospects for other students constantly increasing this school was becoming more and more an indispensable factor in the Cuban missionary program.

Miss Barnard had returned to India in 1944 and her work there was most prosperous. A school of missions, located near Kotagiri, South India, had increased from an enrollment of ten to fifteen to forty or fifty pupils. The crying need in India was for more missionaries and because of the fact that none were available, Purnea district had to be turned down as a Free Will Baptist field.

A financial crisis occurred during 1946 and for some three months the cause of missions suffered seriously. However, the anxious days eventually passed and the year's receipts were \$32,597.07.

The need for additional helpers in India went unheeded until April 10, 1947, when Rev. and Mrs. Paul Woolsey went there, and were joined by Rev. and Mrs. Daniel R. Cronk soon thereafter. Mr. Woolsey had been intimately connected with Free Will Baptist work down through the years and had held several important positions. He had served as superintendent of the Tennessee state orphanage for some three years and was well known in educational circles in East Tennessee, having taught in the public school systems there. He was invaluable to the mission and it was thru his willingness to pioneer that the Purnea district in North India was claimed for Free Will Baptists.

Mr. and Mrs. Cronk went to India in the fall of 1948 and were assigned to the Purnea district. He is a native of Detroit, Michigan, and Mrs. Cronk is from East Tennessee and the foster daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Woolsey. They have filled a great need in India and at the present are the senior Free Will Baptist missionaries in North India, Mr. and Mrs. Woolsey having left the field after six years of service, in 1953. The Cronks have Rev. and Mrs. Carlisle Hanna as co-workers in Purnea District. Mr. Hanna is a native of South Carolina and Mrs. Hanna of Missouri. Miss Barnard, still in Kotagiri, South India, has Miss Volena Wilson from Marion, N. C., as her helper. The school there has grown into a fully recognized school and enrolls some 200 pupils. A full program of services is carried on in Kotagiri and a beautiful Free Will Baptist church is located there. Miss Barnard has completed 20 years of missionary service and her accomplishments cannot be enumerated, they are so many.

The work in Cuba continues to thrive. Rev. and Mrs. Robert Wil-

long went there in 1949 and spent 3½ years on the field, returning to the states to further their training. Miss Lucy Wisehart joined the staff in Cuba as bookkeeper in 1953 and is still there. Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Phenicie have been connected with Free Will Baptist work in Cuba for the past five years and are a very vital link of the great chain in Cuba.

In 1954, Rev. and Mrs. Wesley Calvery, who had been trying unsuccessfully for two years to get into India, were sent to Japan as the first Free Will Baptists missionaries ever to set foot on that island. They are stationed in Tokyo, where they are studying the language and carrying on Bible classes and preaching services at the same time. They are doing some outstanding work and have great plans for the day when they can be adept at the language and thus enjoy a wider and more effective ministry. Rev. Calvery is a native of Texas and Mrs. Calvery is from Arkansas. Both are graduates of the Free Will Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee, and have done graduate work at George Peabody College in Nashville.

The Board of Foreign Missions has a representative in Africa in the person of Mrs. Josephine Stevens. Mrs. Stevens, the former Josephine Mumpower, is a graduate of Columbia Bible College, and has been in Africa with her husband, Harold, for the past seven years. She is supported by a group of Free Will Baptist churches in Western North Carolina and has remained a member of her home church in that state.

Income into the department has increased greatly since a fulltime promotional secretary was employed in 1953. Rev. Raymond Riggs, of Highland Park, Michigan, who had served in various capacities on the Board of Foreign Missions for a number of years, was elected by the board and sent out at that time. Total income in 1954 reached \$82,840.00 and six missionary candidates were being processed for active duty on the field. A budget of \$93,000 has been set for 1956. The Board of Foreign Missions is incorporated under the laws of the State of Tennessee and maintains membership in the Evangelical Foreign Mission Association. The Board consists of Revs. Mark Lewis, Michigan; Reford Wilson, Arkansas; Rolla Smith, Missouri; J. W. Alford, North Carolina, and Raymond Riggs, Tennessee.



## CHAPTER XXII

### FREE WILL BAPTISTS AND HOME MISSIONS

The Free Will Baptist movement was started by men who were vitally concerned with spreading the influence of Christ and His church through the preaching of the Gospel into every nook and cranny of the new world in which they were living. This was to be their home and the home of those who came after them. It was the land of opportunity which they had sought and it afforded them a haven from persecution and prejudice. Therefore, it must be evangelized.

Paul Palmer was such a man whose vision of the possibilities in the new land prompted him to strike out through the colonies preaching the Gospel. Down into North Carolina he came, stopping here and there to conduct services and to encourage the Christians and organize churches. Wherever he could gather a congregation, he preached the Word. Many came to know the Lord through his ministry and others were strengthened in the faith. Soon the voice of Palmer came to symbolize the free salvation which he preached and before long his adherents numbered into the hundreds. Other men were called into the ministry through this man's labors, and they took up the torch and carried it into other localities. One of them was Dr. Josiah Hart who, as an enthusiastic evangelist, preached in many places in North Carolina and South Carolina.

William and Joseph Parker became obsessed with a desire to make a wide and extensive journey into the newer frontiers. They struck out across the country, preaching as they went. They were accosted by unbelievers, set upon by uncouth man, and gainsaid by Quakers and Calvinists. Many times they were refused lodging and forced to sleep out in the open, with the sky as their canopy. Yet they went on undaunted, spurred on by the obligation which they felt to carry the Gospel to those in the out-of-the-way places who otherwise would never hear it.

Eventually the Free Will Baptist message caught on and began to spread into other areas. When it reached northward and found a champion in the person of Benjamin Randall, it became a real force in the new life of a new Republic. This man of God accepted as his personal challenge the evangelization of the northeast and his per-

sonal program of home missions was perhaps the largest one-man venture in that direction ever to be undertaken up to that time. Journey after journey was made on gospel-preaching tours. Some of these trips covered as much as a thousand miles, much of which was covered on foot. On his first home mission tour into Maine, Mr. Randall was gone for four months, covered 1000 miles and preached 300 times, organizing five congregations during the time.

In 1792, another bright star on the home mission horizon arose in the person of John Colby. He had been converted under Mr. Randall's preaching after having completed his education and it was a great joy to the heart of the Free Will Baptist founder when Mr. Colby answered the call to the ministry. From the very first it was evident that this man's calling was that of a home missionary, for after having preached with gratifying results in several of the established churches, he came to Mr. Randall one day and spoke of his desire to make a missionary tour into the west, as far as Ohio and back by way of Pennsylvania. The two men sought God's will in prayer, and having secured what they believed to be the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the matter, they made final plans for Colby's journey.

The first lap of the trip made by Colby and a companion took them into familiar territory and at each stopover they conducted services, with many people accepting the Lord. At length, they came into Ohio and it was here that they met with the first opposition. The Quakers had heard of their coming and had prepared a not-too-welcome reception for them. Wherever they preached, they were heckled and disturbed. Undaunted, Mr. Colby arranged for a service one evening in a large settlement where there was a large Quaker population. As usual, many of this sect turned out and proceeded with their usual molestations. The preacher (Colby) stopped the service and called for quietness. When every eye was turned to him, he dropped to his knees and began to pray. Such an impassioned petition poured from his heart that conviction seized upon all who were there, Quakers as well. Men began to cry out for mercy and forgiveness and women to weep and scream. Mr. Colby arose and began to exhort the penitents and soon people were praying for salvation everywhere. After this service, they continued in that place for many days and a great revival resulted.

This experience seemed to break down the Quaker resistance and in most of the remaining places where they preached, they were re-

ceived graciously. After two and one-half years, the preacher and his companion returned to New Durham, New Hampshire, and rested from their arduous trip. However, the respite was short-lived, for soon Mr. Colby was ready to start out again.

The mission this time was aimed at northeastern Maine and Canada. Three men besides Colby comprised the party. They made the trip by any conveyance which could be found, traveling on foot over many rough miles. When they arrived in northeastern Maine they found large groups of eager people waiting for them. Colby's preaching was attended by great power and hundreds were converted and the first Free Will Baptist churches in that area were organized. Residents of New Brunswick, Canada, who had heard Mr. Colby preach in Maine urged him to come to their towns, so the trip was extended into Canada.

The same response was met there and multitudes attended the services and several congregations were organized, many of which are still in existence today. Colby's team gradually worked eastward and when an invitation came to them to extend their labors into Nova Scotia, they accepted it heartily. The trip to the island was made by boat and was well-nigh tragic, when about a mile out from land the vessel capsized and the lives of all on board were imperiled. However, all were eventually rescued and returned to the shore, where they were later put on another vessel and the journey was made without a mishap.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Colby's ministry was as eventful and successful in Nova Scotia as it had been elsewhere and after six months of labor there he had set in order three new churches.

From here, the party turned back toward home and after an absence of three and one-half years, they were back where they had begun their historic home missionary tour.

In 1836, the first Free Will Baptist Home Missionary Society was organized by General Conference. This organization was sparked by the challenging new frontiers that were being opened up by the westward expansion of the United States of America. At each succeeding Tri-ennial Conference, a Committee on the New West was appointed to work with the Home Missionary Society to plan and sponsor new Free Will Baptist churches in the west as towns and communities were opened up. As a result, the Free Will Baptist church was in on the ground floor of many opportunities and many churches sprang up and prospered under the sponsorship of the Society.

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<sup>1</sup> *Life of John Colby*, Author Unknown, *Morning Star Press*, 1842.



One of the most magnanimous tasks ever to be undertaken by the Society was the building of churches in three major cities; Chicago, Illinois; Cleveland, Ohio, and Boston, Massachusetts. The aid of the Sunday Schools and Advocates of Christian Fidelity (the Free Will Baptist youth organization) was enlisted for this job, and in five years' time, a successful conclusion to the campaign was announced. An idea of this accomplishment can be gleaned from the fact that the Boston church alone cost \$50,000.

In 1850 another valiant home missionary among Free Will Baptists came into prominence in Southern Illinois in the person of Rev. Henry S. Gordon. Mr. Gordon was converted at 14 years of age and joined the Missionary Baptist church. In 1837 he was called into the ministry and was soon thereafter enrolled in Shurtleff college, where he received his education, paying his tuition by splitting rails and cutting cordwood. After graduation, he preached with good acceptance and results throughout South Illinois. In 1850 he was called in question for conducting an open communion service and was summarily excluded from the Missionary Baptist church, whereupon, in January 1851, he gathered a group of sympathizers together and organized the first Free Will Baptist church ever to be set up in South Illinois called Looney Creek church, near Campbell Hill, Illinois. Shortly afterwards he organized Pipestone church, near what is now Denmark, Illinois, and Rockwood, near Pleasant Hill, Illinois. These three churches were organized into an association in 1851 and became known as the South Illinois Association of Free Communion Baptists. By 1876 the group of churches had increased to twelve and the Association united with the General Conference of Free Will Baptists. In 1877 the name "Free Communion" was dropped and that of "Freewill" was adopted.<sup>2</sup>

Many other noble and praiseworthy men and women have labored as home missionaries in the Free Will Baptist cause, among them Rev. T. C. Ferguson, who organized numerous churches in Missouri and Kansas, Rev. and Mrs. H. M. McAdams, whose labors in Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri still live on, and many others whom space will not permit us to mention. One of the more important figures was a Miss Crawford, who served for years as a home missionary among Southern Negroes during the period im-

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<sup>2</sup> *Life and Labors of Rev. Henry S. Gordon*, Rev. George A. Gordon (1901).



mediately following the Civil War. She taught for awhile in Storer College, at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia.

In 1938, at the second session of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, the first Home Mission Board was elected in modern Free Will Baptist history. The personnel of that Board was: Rev. M. L. Hollis, Tupelo, Mississippi; Rev. J. K. Warkentin, Fort Worth, Texas; Mrs. J. E. Frazier, Nashville, Tennessee; Rev. Mrs. Lizzie McAdams, Huntsville, Texas, and Rev. George Dunbar, of Chuckey, Tennessee. This board became active and in addition to setting up a program of work, they collected \$256 that first year. By 1941, the board was functioning in an ever-enlarging field, and the chairman, Rev. Hollis, reported several new churches organized and total collections of \$658. Most of the new organizations were in Mississippi and Alabama, while the funds for home missions were reported from ten different states.

The Home Mission Board in its report to the National Association in 1942 made five recommendations, all of which were adopted. They are listed here to give an idea of how this phase of the work was developing:

"The activities of this Board shall be confined to:

1. The support of workers who shall enter new fields under the instructions of this Board . . .

2. Giving financial assistance in pastoral care of churches which are unable to support a pastor . . .

3. We recommend that every Free Will Baptist church send \$1.00 monthly to the treasurer, 50 cents of which shall be used in the state from which it came.

4. We recommend that State and District Home Mission Boards promote this plan of finance. . . .

5. We recommend that State and District Boards make monthly reports to this Board, which in turn will compile a monthly report for publication."

This proposed program of financing the Home Mission program was never too successful, and for some three or four years this department of the work had a struggle to keep going. The men who served on the board were conscientious, hard-working, persistent leaders, but the people out over the denomination did not respond to their appeals.

Then in 1950, the Home Mission Board suddenly began to become popular. It seemed that almost overnight, the home mission obligation began to take hold, and the next few years saw a marvelous change in this venture. Rev. J. B. Bloss, of Columbia, Tenn., was chairman of the Board, with Rev. Harry E. Staires of Oklahoma the secretary. These men launched a campaign for home missions which was accepted by the people generally. Receipts soared 900% from 1948 to 1953 and new churches were organized by the scores. By this time the program had become an accepted fact and was on everybody's heart.

In 1953 the board employed a full-time promotional secretary and set up a national office in Nashville, Tennessee. Receipts jumped 300% during that year, so that in 1954, the Board was in a position to place home missionaries on the field. The first three of these teams were publicly commissioned at the National Association in Spartanburg, South Carolina in 1954. They were: Rev. and Mrs. Robert Wilfong, of Missouri, who were sent to Tampa, Florida to work with the Cubans; Rev. and Mrs. G. C. Lee, Jr., of Mississippi, who were sent to Shelton, Nebraska to revive our Nebraska Free Will Baptist work; and Rev. and Mrs. Sylvester Crawford, who were sent to California on an interim assignment. The following year, 1955, additional missionaries were sent out as follows: Rev. and Mrs. James E. Timmons, Texas, to work in Mexico; Rev. and Mrs. J. J. Postlewaite, of Missouri, to Oregon and Washington; and Miss Bessie Yeley, to Tampa, Florida.

The home mission program has been directly or indirectly responsible for the organization of more than 450 new Free Will Baptist churches since August 1, 1952. In addition to this, Free Will Baptist churches have been found in Maine, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and New York, and at the present, plans are being perfected to put forth efforts to re-enlist these churches into the denomination.

The present membership of the Home Mission Board includes:

Rev. J. B. Bloss, chairman—Columbia, Tennessee  
Rev. H. E. Willis, secretary—Paintsville, Kentucky  
Rev. Willard C. Day—Tulsa, Oklahoma  
Rev. R. H. Jackson—Middlesex, N. C.  
Rev. Harry E. Staires—Tulsa, Oklahoma

The board is incorporated under the laws of the State of Tennessee, and its home office is stated as Nashville, Davidson county, Tennessee. Rev. D. C. Dodd, of Nashville Tennessee, is the promotional secretary of the board.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### FREE WILL BAPTISTS AND EDUCATION

One of the contributing causes leading to the organization of the Free Will Baptist denomination was the fact that piety and spirituality among ministers in the early 18th century had been sacrificed for education and training. It was not so imperative that the preacher be godly and a lover of souls as it was that he be proficient in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek. Each candidate for ordination was required to pass a rigid exam in the classics and also in the three languages, as well as in the Bible. This sort of emphasis soon led to a departure on the part of the ministers from the preaching of a Gospel of powerful simplicity to a system of lecturers on many and varied subjects. The ministers themselves became formal and cold and their congregations suffered for lack of instruction in the basics of the Christian life.

Another detrimental element in all this was that the minister, being the highly educated man that he was, was sought after by both the political and business world, and in many instances the temptation was so great that he left his flock to go to the position of fame and fortune.

Such conditions were existing among the ministry when George Whitefield came to this country on his first evangelistic tour. After having observed the churches and preachers for several months, he made this statement; "the reason there are so many cold hearts in the pews is that there are dead men in the pulpits."<sup>1</sup> Many of the people resented such forthrightness, but most of them knew that it was true. The reaction among the ministers to this statement was especially note-worthy, and many of them were actually brought to realize how inadequately they were feeding their starving flocks.

When the Free Will Baptist movement began, there were two things that were set out in regards to ministers: (1) That piety and godliness were to be preferred before Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, (2) That ministers were to preach the Gospel wherever they could, regardless of the amount of money involved or political or business prestige available. The result was inevitable. In a short time the ministry of

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<sup>1</sup> *History of Free Will Baptists*, Vol. 1, I. D. Stewart.

the new movement was a part-time ministry. Men worked six days a week and preached to their congregations on Sunday. They were farmers for the larger part and, having given so much of their time and strength to workaday toil, they were unable to give of their best to their people when they preached to them. Soon the churches began to suffer for lack of sufficient pastoral care and the Calvinists, taking advantage of this weakness, made severe inroads into the Free Will Baptist churches and took over many of them. This seemed to arouse the people and give them the vision that they so much needed in regards to a more stable and qualified ministry. Coincidentally, or perhaps we should say providentially, along about this time, several men came into the Free Will Baptist ministry who were well-educated men, and their work was a definite case-in-point of the value of training to the minister.

The movement under Randall was somewhat different in this respect then was that under Palmer. From the outset, Mr. Randall realized the importance of training for the minister, and while he, himself, had not had the educational opportunities that he so desired, he spent many hours in study and preparation, and became one of the most thoroughly prepared men of his day. For several years following the founding of the Free Will Baptist work in the north, there was no school for the training of ministers. However, this was always one of Mr. Randall's most intense desires, and he planned for it and looked forward to the day when the young denomination could have its own school.

With the organization of the General Conference in 1821, plans were laid for a school for the training of ministers and Christian workers, but several years were to transpire before these plans could materialize. There was very little money and while the people were not averse to a school, they were not sufficiently interested to warrant too much emphasis on such a program. Nevertheless the idea was kept alive by constant and persistent mention and at last the people began to respond to the idea little by little.

### PARSONFIELD SEMINARY

The very first Bible School of which we have any record was established in Parsonfield, Maine, on September 3, 1832. It was known as Parsonfield Seminary and while not under strict denomination supervision, it was used almost exclusively for the training of



ministers. Courses were offered in Bible, Rhetoric, Greek, English, and related subjects and many younger men who were being called into the ministry spent some time in school at the seminary in Parsonfield.

#### STRATTFORD ACADEMY

Two years later, an academy for both sexes was opened in Stratford, Vermont. This was May 13, 1834. Just how long this school continued, we do not know, for the fate of Stratford Academy is not clearly set forth in Free Will Baptist history. No doubt it served its purpose as an institution dedicated to the educating of young men and young women in an aura of Christian surroundings.

Randall's dream of an educational movement in the denomination was partially realized on January 15, 1840, when the Educational Society was organized. The purpose of this society was to foster the cause of education in the denomination and to encourage the people to finance such a program. The first effort on the part of this Society was the establishing of a Bible School on September 2, 1840. As the name implies, this school was devoted wholly to teaching the Bible and related subjects and catered to ministers and Christian workers.

One of the earliest leaders in education in the Free Will Baptist denomination was Ransom Dunn. Born in Bakersfield, Vermont, July 7, 1818 to John and Abigail Dunn, he was the youngest of seven children born to this couple. "At his birth, when his mother's sister, Aunt Betsy Reed Carroll, asked what should be his name, the answer came quickly, 'Ransom, for he is the ransomed of the Lord.' The years proved that it was as his mother had spoken, for he spent sixty-four years in the ministry and forty-three years as a professor in a Christian college, thirty-five of these as a teacher of theology."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Dunn was converted at the age of twelve in a prayer meeting which was being conducted by his brother-in-law, a Mr. Montague. He gives his own testimony regarding church membership in the following manner:<sup>3</sup>

"For three years my profession of faith was maintained by attending and participating in prayer meetings. I united with no church. There were two pedo-baptist churches not far from my home, but as I did not be-

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<sup>2</sup> *Life and Labors of Rev. Ransom Dunn*, Helen D. Gates, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

lieve that infant sprinkling was Christian baptism, I could not unite . . . I did not like the episcopacy . . . and neither could I accept the predestination of the other church which believed repentance, faith, and salvation possible only for the elect, and that regeneration by the immutable purpose of God necessarily must precede repentance and faith . . . I prayed and struggled for weeks for increase of divine grace. At last I went 20 miles to attend a meeting of days, hoping for new light and new power. But more discouraged than ever, I started home at sunset. The half-developed moon and fleecy clouds only added to the gloom of the evening ride. I could think of no other place to go for help, and I said in my heart to God, 'I can do nothing else.' Before I was aware of it the gloom was gone. Upon reaching home, it seemed more desirable to retire to the grove for prayer, rather than to bed for rest. In the next prayer meeting the atmosphere was different. Instead of a minute in prayer I wanted an hour; instead of a single sentence of testimony I could exhort earnestly. That little church of ten members, mostly old people, with no prospects for a house of worship or pastor, seemed to me better than the large church in the village, because their doctrines agreed with the New Testament and their praying was in the Holy Ghost. I was baptized and united with the church . . ."

In 1836, the first Saturday in September, Mr. Dunn was licensed to preach the gospel. Already the Lord had been dealing with him about going west to preach, and now Dunn set out in real earnest to make plans to this effect. He had had very little formal education when he went to Ohio in 1838, Dunn nevertheless enjoyed a most successful ministry. Upon returning to Vermont in 1841, he was able to attend school at New Hampton Institute and Whitestown Bible School.

#### GEUGA SEMINARY

Upon his return to Ohio, Mr. Dunn was soon given the privilege of setting up the Geuga Seminary in Chester, Ohio. This took place in 1842. In June of 1844, Mr. Dunn went to Spring Arbor, Michigan, and assisted in the opening up of another Free Will Baptist school, Michigan Central College. This school remained in operation until 1854, when it was moved to Hillsdale, Michigan. This move came about when the town of Hillsdale offered to underwrite the college in a more favorable way financially, if it were moved there.

#### HILLSDALE COLLEGE

The people of Spring Arbor sought an injunction to prevent losing the college, but lost the suit which followed. On November 7, 1855, Hillsdale College was formally opened on a 25-acre campus, which had been donated by Hillsdale county, along with a cash gift of

\$37,000, all of which had come about thru the efforts of Mr. Dunn. As soon as the college was in operation, Mr. Dunn went out on the field and in two years' time raised over \$20,000. In later years he secured \$74,000 in special endowments for the college, \$5,900 in notes, and \$1,900 in cash, making in all more than \$104,000 that he added to the endowment fund of the college. He was one of the members of the first Board of Trustees of Hillsdale and was also treasurer for several years.

In 1871, a time of crisis came to Hillsdale College and Mr. Dunn, who had been living in Nebraska, was urged to come at once and help settle the dispute. He came and his presence and wisdom saved the day for the school. The president resigned and Dunn was offered the position. He declined this offer but accepted a position on the faculty, where he taught logic and English. All went well until 1874, when on the night of March 6, during the spring vacation, fire broke out, eventually destroying the entire school plant. Immediate action was taken, however, to rebuild the school, and in the meantime classes were held in the church and students lived in private homes that the townspeople provided.

### RIO GRANDE COLLEGE

During the rebuilding of Hillsdale, Mr. Dunn secured a leave of absence and went to Gallia county, Ohio, to assist in establishing Rio Grande College. This property had been given by Deacon Nehemiah Atwood. The provisions of the will made it necessary to build a denominational college at Rio Grande and for this purpose Mr. Atwood's pastor, Rev. I. L. Hanning, moved to Rio Grande, and called on Mr. Dunn to join him and assist him in setting up the college. Professor Dunn secured the charter and organized the Board of Trustees in November, 1875. He was elected president and served for four years, when he was succeeded by Professor A. A. Moulton. Two buildings on ten acres of land constituted the property, valued at \$40,000. The school opened for students in September, 1876.

### BATES COLLEGE

In 1873, Bates College, in Lewiston, Main, had conferred on Professor Dunn the degree of Doctor of Divinity. Bates College was established by order of the General Conference of Free Will Baptists in session at Hillsdale, Michigan, November 1-9, 1862. Lewiston, Maine, was chosen as the site for the college, and on September 1,

1863, the school was ready for operation. It was chartered by the state of Maine, and, like the other Free Will Baptist institutions, was opened to both sexes of any color. In June, 1870, the Biblical School in Whitestown, New York, united with Bates College, and in July, 1870, Bates Theological Seminary was opened. This soon became the outstanding Free Will Baptist seminary and many of the leading ministers of the northeast were graduates of this school.

### OTHER SCHOOLS

Other Free Will Baptist schools which served the denomination were as follows:<sup>4</sup> *Keuka College*, in Keuka Park, New York. This was a liberal arts school and offered commercial courses as well. Rev. George H. Ball, of Keuka, was the president at the time of the merger in 1910.

*Lyndon Institute*, Lyndon Center, Vermont—"one of the best equipped secondary schools in the state. Graduates of this Institute are in Yale, Bates, Dartmouth, State University." Founded August 23, 1870.

*Maine Central Institute*, Pittsfield, Maine—a preparatory school operated by Free Baptists of the state of Maine. Founded in February 1, 1866.

*New Hampton Literary Institution and Commercial College*, New Hampton, New Hampshire—"Best commercial college in the state." Operated by the New Hampshire and Vermont Free Baptists Convention. Founded January 26, 1853.

*Parker College*, Winnebago City, Minnesota—a western liberal arts college under the auspices of the General Conference of Free Baptists.

*The Pike Seminary*, Pike, Wyoming county, New York—special attention given to preparing students for college. English required in all courses. A daily noonday prayer meeting.

*Clinton Seminary*—founded 1841.

*Maine State Seminary*—founded March 16, 1855.

*Storer College*, Harper's Ferry, West Virginia—founded in 1867. A college for Negroes operated by the General Conference of Free Will Baptists.

*Manning Bible Institute*, Cairo, Illinois—for Negroes, under Western agency of General Conference of Free Will Baptists.

In addition to these twenty institutes and colleges in Free Baptist ranks, a Bible school was opened in India on May 1, 1879. In 1904

<sup>4</sup> *Free Will Baptist Register and Year Book*, 1904. pp. 131-134.



a high school in Balasore, India, reported 142 pupils and eleven teachers.

This is a general picture of the educational program of Free Will Baptists at the time of the merger in 1910. Many of these schools had been given to the Free Will Baptist denomination, and provisions made by deed to guarantee that they would remain thus. However, the trend of things following the merger altered all of this, and whether legally or illegally, remains to be seen. One fact is outstanding. After 1917, the date of the last meeting of General Conference, not a single college or Bible institute remained for Free Will Baptists. Everyone of them was taken over by the merged group and eventually passed to inter-denominational control. Such has been the fate of Hillsdale College, in Michigan; Bates, in Maine; and Rio Grande, in Ohio.

#### TECUMSEH COLLEGE

Foremost in reconstruction plans among Free Will Baptists following the merger, were plans for schools. The first success came in the west when the General Cooperative Association opened Tecumseh College, in Tecumseh, Oklahoma, in 1917. The property had been given by a group of Tecumseh business men as a means of attracting the denomination to come there and set up the college. The first president was Rev. John H. Wolfe, a graduate of Hillsdale College. Mr. Wolfe set up a full-fledged college program, along with a prep school. From its outset, Tecumseh College was beset with enemies and problems. Jealousies on the part of individuals and dishonesty on the part of others, some of whom were connected with the college, so undermined and weakened this institution, that her usefulness was severely limited. In 1927, the college was destroyed by fire, and never completely rebuilt. Under Rev. B. F. Brown, president at that time, one of the buildings was partially rebuilt but schoolwork was never resumed. The property was soon sold and today the First Free Will Baptist church of Tecumseh stands on the old college site.

#### FREE WILL BAPTIST SEMINARY AND EUREKA COLLEGE

In the late 1800's—about 1896—the Free Will Baptist Seminary was founded in Ayden, North Carolina. This school was in operation during the time of the founding of Tecumseh College and was widely influential in the east and south. It was under the sponsorship of the state convention of North Carolina. In later years it became known as Eureka College, a continuation of the old seminary, and

was the only educational institution operated by Free Will Baptists for a number of years. This school went out of existence when the property was destroyed by fire.

#### ZION BIBLE SCHOOL

For several years the denomination was left without an educational institution of any kind, with both the Tecumseh college and the Ayden College having been wiped out by fire. The only other school of which we have any record was a small Bible training school known as Zion Bible School, located in Blakely, Georgia and headed by Rev. T. B. Mellette, who was secretary of the revived Eastern Conference for many years. This school carried on a limited program but the students who attended were later to become some of the leaders for a better educational institution. This school operated until 1942, when it closed out in deference to the school which was established by the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

With the reviving of the Eastern General Conference in 1921, an education committee was appointed to begin to lay plans for a school, to be located in Nashville, Tennessee. Rev. J. L. Welch was named chairman of the committee and before many years had passed, a proposal was made for opening the school in Nashville. It was to begin on the high school level and the college courses were to be included as the demand arose. The facilities of the Cofer's Chapel church were offered as a place in which to begin the classes. This proposal was adopted by the Conference but never did materialize, inasmuch as increased fellowship between the two bodies, the Eastern Conference and the Cooperative Association made it possible to name a joint educational committee. This committee was composed of six members, three from each body, and were: J. L. Welch, chairman, Tennessee; T. B. Mellette, secretary, Georgia; J. W. Alford, North Carolina; Melvin Bingham, Oklahoma; Selph Jones, Missouri, and E. E. Morris, Oklahoma. This group continued its work until 1935, when the National Association elected a Board of Education to work on a proposed school program. This was the official board of the National Association, and was made up of Rev. J. L. Welch, Secretary of Education; Rev. Henry Melvin, Rev. Selph Jones, Rev. J. C. Griffin, Rev. M. F. Van Hoose, and Rev. E. A. O'Donnell.

In 1938, the Education Board was elected as follows: J. R. Davidson, chairman, Texas; George Dunbar, Tennessee; J. R. Bennett, North Carolina; Melvin Bingham, Oklahoma, and D. S. Jones, Missouri. This board took the responsibility of actually getting a school

program underway. The chairman, Rev. J. R. Davidson, set about in real earnest to devise ways and means of locating and purchasing property for the school and the Board cooperated to the fullest extent. An idea of the progress being made can be had by looking at the Board's report for 1939, made in Bryan, Texas.

"The entire past year has been spent in an effort to create a greater interest in Christian education. In our endeavor, we have gone beyond our fondest dream. There is not only an increasing interest but a greater demand for Christian education than we have ever seen. . . . we now have in the treasury the sum of \$1,019.99 and pledges to the amount of \$202.00. There is also a reserve reported in Tennessee of from six to seven hundred dollars . . ."<sup>5</sup>

In 1940, the Education Board recommended the adoption of a \$15,000 goal. This amount was to be used as follows: \$5,000 for promotional efforts and \$10,000 for the educational fund. In 1941, at the meeting of the National Association in Drumright, Oklahoma, the education program was giving real promise of things definite. The Association voted to "empower, authorize, and direct the Board of Education of the National Association to purchase, hold, and control suitable real property for a Bible school in Nashville, Tennessee. . . . It is required . . . that the Board of Education shall not invest more than \$15,000 in said Bible school property, and that the annual payment on any unpaid balance, or loan shall not exceed \$3,000 in the interest and principal."<sup>6</sup>

In the fall of 1941, the board located a valuable and suitable piece of property in Nashville, Tennessee at 3609 Richland Avenue. Let us go to the minutes of the 1942 meeting of the National Association held in Columbus, Mississippi for the exact record.

"In our endeavor to carry out your orders in the purchase of Bible School property, we feel assured of the fact that the property, the price, and the terms speak for the wisdom exercised in this matter. . . . the generosity of Mr. W. O. Tirrill, of Nashville, . . . together with what we were able to raise in offerings, enabled us to make a down payment of \$5,000, the remainder (\$10,000) being arranged according to the specified instructions recorded in the 1941 minutes of the National Association . . .

"So far as your Board of Education is concerned, it is ready to hear from you as to your will concerning opening the Bible school this fall. This has been our plan; however, it is our purpose to go forward only at the order of this Body."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Minutes of National Association*, 1939, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> *Minutes of National Association*, 1941, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> *Report of Board of Education*, p. 28.

On Thursday afternoon, July 16, 1942, the above report of the Board of Education was read to the assembled delegates and ministers of the National Association of Free Will Baptists. The following is taken from page 10 of the minutes of the 1942 meeting:

"Motion was made and carried that the Board of Education be authorized to proceed with the completion of all plans to open the Bible school in Nashville on September 15, 1942.

"Motion that this body give a rising vote of thanks to Rev. J. R. Davidson for his untiring and sacrificial service as chairman and treasurer of the national board, and that he be asked to lead us in a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God for this victory.

"Bro. Davidson requested the other members of the board to assemble around the altar with him while the prayer of thanksgiving was being offered."

And so the Free Will Baptist Bible school was born and a goal was reached for which many had striven for over a decade.

It would be unfair to close this chapter without making mention of Rev. L. R. Ennis, the executive secretary of the denomination. Mr. Ennis did much for this program and it was he who suggested the plan of the foundation checks, the method by which the funds were raised to pay off the indebtedness.

### MOUNT OLIVE COLLEGE

The newest addition to Free Will Baptist educational institutions is Mount Olive College, which is owned and operated by the North Carolina state convention. The college began operation as a Bible Institute in September, 1952, at the state assembly grounds, Cragmont, near Asheville, N. C. Rev. Lloyd Vernon served as the first president and opened the school with twelve students. It was originally named Mount Allen College for the mountain on which it began.

In September, 1953, the state convention authorized the purchase of property in the town of Mount Olive. Mr. Vernon continued as president during 1953-54. In August, 1954, Rev. W. Burkette Raper was elected president and the school began operation that year as a junior college.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### FREE WILL BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE

This chapter is the story of a dream come true. It marks the greatest single accomplishment of the Free Will Baptist denomination since the organization of the National Association of Free Will Baptists. Every bit of this chapter is based on firsthand information and personal experience and is as true and accurate as living human beings can possibly make it. Written into this chapter of the Free Will Baptist story is the realization of the hopes of more than 500 men and women who have gone for training to Free Will Baptist Bible College. And herein is contained the underlying spirit of determination and purpose and indomitable courage that has marked the Free Will Baptist denomination in times of crisis or need.

Many people who are now living have had a part in making this part of the story possible and each one shall be given the credit which is rightfully his. However, it would be impossible, in this short treatise, to give much space to any individual, so we must content ourselves with the accounting of details of growth rather than with biographies of persons.

Our source material for this chapter is fourfold. First, the minutes of the National Association of Free Will Baptists presents the history from the standpoint of the Board of Trustees and the administrative side. The complete file of National Association minutes since 1935 has been available for research on all these matters. Second, the *Annals of Free Will Baptist Bible College* have been faithfully kept by this author since 1943 and they present the social and study side. Third, a calendar of historical events of Free Will Baptist Bible College has been accurately kept by Mrs. J. L. Welch, college secretary, and this calendar has been made available to the writer. Four, consultation with President L. C. Johnson and various board members, and personal recollection of early college history have been employed as a final source of information.

Honorable mention belongs to everyone who had a part in financing the original undertaking through their giving to the Foundation Fund. An appropriate memoriam has been dedicated to them in the form of a bronze plaque mounted in Davidson Hall, the first building

acquired by the college. The following is a list of those who gave:

John Moody, Anderson, Texas	\$ 100	Third church, St. Louis, Mo.	...\$ 100
Robert Franklin Pittman, Ayden, N. C.	100	Fredericktown church, Mo.	100
Christian Workers' Institute, Monett, Mo.	100	Rev. C. B. Dees, Flat River, Mo.	100
<i>Free Will Baptist Gem</i> , Monett, Mo.	100	Mr. and Mrs. C. G. Little, Greenville, N. C.	100
Pine Creek Quarterly Meeting, Portsmouth, Ohio	100	Rev. H. M. and Lizzie McAdams, Huntsville, Texas	100
Porter Quarterly Meeting, Portsmouth, Ohio	100	Indian Creek Association, Mo.	100
Christian Workers' Institute, Tulsa, Okla.	100	Albemarle District Union Meeting, N. C.	100
C. R. Hollis, Sulligent, Ala.	100	Webbs Prairie church, Ill.	100
Rev. and Mrs. D. B. Hellard, Sapulpa, Okla.	100	Mrs. Sophia Hardee, Greenville, N. C.	100
A. H. Spurlock, Mt. Vernon, Ill. (First church)	100	Cape Fear Conference, N. C.	100
Franklin County Quarterly Meeting, Ill.	100	Olivet church, Guthrie, Ky.	100
Arnold View, Mt. Zion, and Liberty churches, Ill.	100	Eastern Conference, N. C.	100
First church, Tulsa, Okla.	100	Wooddale and Forest Grove churches, Knoxville, Tenn.	100
B. F. Payne, Carthage, Texas	100	Woman's National Auxiliary Convention	200
East Texas Quarterly Meeting	100	Ashland City church, Tenn.	100
Sweet Gum Grove church, Pitt County, N. C.	100	Bakerville church, McKinney Chapel, Union Grove church, and Woman's Auxiliary of Rescue church, Ill.	100
Rev. Lloyd Light	100	Trent church, Piney Grove church, Gum Neck church, and Corinth church, N. C.	100
Ladies' Aid Convention, Cum- berland Association, Tenn.	100	Marsh Swamp Woman's Auxiliary, N. C.	100
Christian Workers' Institute, Erwin, Tenn.	100	Bear Point church, Ill.	100
South Georgia Union Meeting	100	Plaster's Grove church (\$25), Harmony church (\$25), and Oakland church (\$50), Ill.	100
Pine Level church, Alma, Ga.	100	Mr. and Mrs. George Webster, Washington, N. C.	100
Cumberland Sunday School Convention, Tenn.	100		
Davis church, N. C.	100		

J. E. Hudgens, Ashland City, Tenn. ....	\$ 100	Mrs. Charles Moehlman, Sr., by Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Cloud, Bryan, Texas .....	\$ 100
Mine LaMotte church, Mo. ....	100	Rev. J. R. Davidson, by Blue Lake church, Texas .....	100
Flat River church, Mo. ....	100	George T. Harris, by Mrs. G. T. Harris, Ashland City, Tenn. ....	100
Mt. Pleasant church (\$25), Bear Point Woman's Auxili- ary (\$25), and Pleasant View church, Ill. ....	100	Rev. Winford Davis, by Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Ricketts, Lamar, Mo. ....	100
Cumberland Association, Tenn.	100	Charles Gideon Pope, Middle- sex, N. C., by Free Will Baptist Orphanage Staff ....	100
Freedom church, Ill. ....	100	William R. Carmichael, by Mrs. Ethel Carmichael, Clay- ton, Texas .....	100
Parkview church, Desloge, Mo.	100	Charles Earnest Brome, by Mrs. Pollie Broome; Robert Armetus Boyette, by Mrs. Rebecca Boyette, and Edwin Bartlet Deans, by Mrs. Senie Deans, Wilson County, N. C.	100
Loyal Chapel church, Columbia, Tenn. ....	100	Elbert F. Trant, by Mrs. Lizzie Trant, Iola, Texas .....	100
Union church, Ill. ....	100	Walter H. Barnes family, by Mrs. Walter H. Barnes, Wil- son, N. C. ....	100
Free Will Baptist church, Indian Creek Association, Mo. ....	100	Mrs. E. D. Parker, by E. D. Parker, Nashville, Tenn. ....	100
J. B. Reding, Adams, Tenn. ....	100	Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Goen, by Icy, Clyde, and Preston Goen, Bryan, Texas .....	100
Oak Grove church, Mo. ....	100	D. N. Nobles, Sr., by D. N. Nobles, Jr., Greenville, N. C.	100
W. L. Powell, Monett, Mo. ....	100	Rev. Cecil Campbell, by Han- non church, Wheaton, Mo. ....	100
Rescue church, Whittington, Ill. ....	100	Mrs. Martha Hudgens, by D. W. Hudgens, Ashland City, Tenn. ....	100
Hull Road church, Snow Hill, N. C. ....	200	Mrs. Callie Gower, by G. E. Gower, Cedar Hill, Tenn. ....	100
Mrs. Sophia Hardee, Greenville, N. C. ....	1,000	Rev. Kenneth Turner, by Free Will Baptist church, Mo. ....	100
Rev. and Mrs. Damon C. Dodd, Flat River, Mo. ....	100		
Rev. and Mrs. John H. Wolfe, Nebraska, sold their home and gave the proceeds			
<i>Memorializing:</i>			
Rev. W. B. Everett, by St. Mary's Church, New Bern, N. C. ....	100		
Dr. Eugene L. St. Claire, Edi- son, Ga., by Glennville church .....	100		
Rev. Charles Cody Wheeler, Texarkana, Texas, by Mrs. Maude Wheeler .....	100		

Rev. and Mrs. B. F. Brown, by Free Will Baptist church, Mo. ....	\$ 100	Rev. L. R. Ennis, by Davis church, N. C. ....	\$1,000
Rev. Winford Davis, by Neosha, church, Mo. ....	100	Mrs. Olivia S. Hodges, by Mrs. Jane E. Whichard and M. H. Whichard, Greenville, N. C. ....	100
Mrs. Ben Boone and Mrs. Lula White, by F. J. Boone, Bryan, Texas ....	100	Central Conference of North Carolina, by M. H. Which- ard .....	100
Rev. Ira Waterman, Eldridge, Mo., by Macedonia church	100	James Thomas Hodges by Eula Hodges, Greenville, N. C. ....	100
Robert William Smith, by Mrs. Robert William Smith, Ayden, N. C. ....	100	Sterling, Farrell, Anna Mae, and Alvin Ray Tucker, by Rev. and Mrs. Albert Tuck- er, River Mines, Mo. ....	100
Mr. and Mrs. P. C. Crawford, Northport, Ala., by Robert B. Crawford .....	100	Tommie and Bobby LaShum, by George LaShum, Monett, Mo. ....	100
Mrs. John Moody, by John Moody, Anderson, Texas ....	100		

Immediately after the National Association, in session in Columbus, Mississippi, July, 1942, had authorized the opening of the Bible School in Nashville, Tennessee, for September 15, 1942, the board began to look about for a man to head such a school. After a careful screening of possibles, the board employed Rev. L. C. Johnson, who was at that time pastor of the Free Will Baptist church in Glennville, Georgia. He was a graduate of Bob Jones College, then located at Cleveland, Tennessee, and his acceptance of the post of president of the new school was hailed all over the denomination. He was a young man of good personality and excellent qualifications for the task, and when first approached on the matter of accepting such responsible position, remonstrated rather vigorously. However, once the need was shown to him, and once he was convinced that he was being led of the Lord to undertake the task, he put himself to the job of setting things in order for the first session.

At the same time, Rev. J. R. Davidson, who had served as chairman and treasurer of the Board of Education had been named business manager-treasurer of the new school and had moved to Nashville from Bryan, Texas, to assume his new post. He was faced with the seemingly impossible task of getting everything in readiness for the first session, which was only a matter of weeks away. The impossible was accomplished, and on September 15, 1942, the Bible School was officially opened to students.



The faculty for the first year numbered only three. Mr. Johnson served as instructor in Bible Synthesis, Ancient History, Bible Doctrine, Personal Evangelism and Homiletics.

Miss Laura Belle Barnard, a missionary home on furlough from India, unable to return due to World War II, was chosen to serve on the faculty until such time as she could return to India. Miss Barnard was a native of Glennville, Georgia, and a member of the Free Will Baptist church there. She was a graduate of Columbia Bible College, Columbia, South Carolina, and had already completed a five-year term as a missionary in India. She taught Composition and Rhetoric, History of Missions, and Biblical Introduction. In addition to her teaching duties, Miss Barnard was secretary and bookkeeper of the college.

Rev. Henry Melvin was the third member of the faculty. He was pastor of the East Nashville Free Will Baptist church and a member of the first Board of Trustees of the college, having been elected to that position in 1942. Mr. Melvin was born and reared near Marianna, Florida, and was a life-long Free Will Baptist. He had received his training at the Free Will Baptist Seminary, Ayden, North Carolina. He taught Chorus and Music Appreciation, and Choral Directing and was in charge of the first Bible School choir.

Miss Gladys Lewis, of Glennville, Georgia, was named dietician and she was assisted by Mrs. Mary Parker, of Nashville.

The Board of Education consisted of Rev. Winford Davis, Missouri; Rev. J. R. Davidson, Tennessee; Rev. George Dunbar, Tennessee; Rev. Melvin Bingham, Oklahoma; and Rev. Henry Melvin, Tennessee. This board was responsible for the ongoing of the school, once it was actually in operation and they did a most excellent job that first year. The new responsibility was a challenging one indeed, because this was a completely new program for Free Will Baptists. There were no pre-conceived ideas or prejudices to pose problems, and the popularity of the school over the denomination almost assured its success from the very outset. This Board enjoyed the wholehearted cooperation of the denomination at large.

The student body which was enrolled in the Bible School the first semester, September, 1942, was comparatively small but was fairly representative. There were nine students from four states, namely:

Paul Kettelman, Illinois

Marie Thomas, Missouri

Damon Dodd, Missouri  
Sylvia Dodd, Missouri  
Rashie Kennedy, North Carolina  
Sam Kennedy, North Carolina  
James Hagin, Georgia  
Opal Hiltibidal, Illinois  
George Waggoner, Illinois

Later in the first semester, three other students came in. They were: Daniel Cronk, Michigan; Chester O'Donnell, Alabama; and Robert Woodard, North Carolina. These twelve people made up the first class in the Free Will Baptist Bible School. The property at 3609 Richland Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee, was large enough to accommodate the group for both classroom space and living quarters. A commodious garage in the rear of the 3609 Richland Ave. property was remodeled and made into a dormitory for men, and thus was the school housed for the first session.

The first event of importance after the opening of school took place on October 13, 1942. With the school actually in operation, the people out over the denomination responded to the financial needs, and poured funds into the treasury. On that day, several people gathered for the formal dedication of the Richland Avenue property. A few days prior to this meeting, the remainder of the indebtedness had been paid off and now the building was to be dedicated to the Lord for the service of education and training of ministers and Christian workers. Rev. L. R. Ennis, executive secretary of the National Association, Rev. George Dunbar, and others appeared on the program. It was a beautiful service and much rejoicing and thanksgiving were the order of the day as the marvelous victory was celebrated. A sense of accomplishment gripped the denomination and the morale was boosted in every department. The Bible School was proving to be good for Free Will Baptists in every respect.

One of the first student organizations to be perfected at Free Will Baptist Bible School was the Missionary Prayer Band. This came about one morning during a class in missions. Miss Laura Barnard, the instructor, was instrumental in setting up this prayer group which was dedicated to praying for missions and missionaries all over the world. The Missionary Prayer Band is still functioning, and during the school year, it meets every day to pray.

In the fall of 1943, or during the second year of school, the Christian Worker's Association was organized. This group was

composed of the men of the school and its purpose was to preach the gospel and witness to the lost wherever the opportunity presented itself. During the first year of its existence, the association conducted services on the streets of Nashville and surrounding cities, in the state penitentiary, in homes, churches, and at housing projects. The members wrote eight gospel tracts and distributed more than 25,000. There were 37 professions reported and at least two new Free Will Baptist churches were the outgrowth of the labors of this group.

Free Will Baptist Bible School was originally set up as a two-year school, and thus, the spring of 1944 marked the close of the first cycle of work. In April, preceding the commencement events, the first denominational Bible conference was held at the school. Speakers for the three-day conference were Rev. L. R. Ennis, denominational executive secretary; Rev. Winford Davis, Missouri, and Rev. George Dunbar, Tennessee. Mr. Ennis gave an analysis on I and II Timothy, Mr. Davis spoke on prophesy, and Mr. Dunbar's messages were on "The Closer Life." The conference closed on Sunday afternoon with an original pageant presented by the student body of the school.

The last day of May, 1944, was the date of the first commencement exercise of the Free Will Baptist Bible College. The graduating class numbered four: Damon C. Dodd, Sylvia (Mrs. Damon C.) Dodd, Marie Thomas Hyatt, and George Waggoner. Rev. J. R. Davidson preached the baccalaureate sermon and Rev. Chester Pelt, of Florida, brought the commencement address. The president, Rev. L. C. Johnson, presided at the service and presented the diplomas. Of these first graduates, three of them are active in the Free Will Baptist denominational program. Rev. George Waggoner is pastor of Baker-ville, Illinois, church and has served as clerk of the National Association; Mrs. Sylvia Dodd is secretary in the national home mission office; and Damon C. Dodd is promotional secretary for the national Home Mission Board.

In 1943, the Bible School came to be known as Free Will Baptist Bible College. The enrollment for the 1943-44 session increased from sixteen (second semester enrollment, 1942-43) to thirty-four and two new members were added to the faculty. Miss Barnard returned to India to her mission field, and Miss Isabell Potts, of Mississippi, was employed to teach English, Education, and Bible. Mrs. Elizabeth Sawyer, a graduate of Ward-Belmont College, Nashville, became head of the music department.

Rev. L. R. Ennis became acting president of the college when Mr.



Johnson resigned in 1944. Rev. Jesse P. Barrow, of North Carolina was added to the faculty that year, and the enrollment was listed as thirty-one. By this time many of the young men were returning from service in World War II, and many of them were qualified for training under the G. I. Bill of Rights. In July, 1945, Free Will Baptist Bible College was approved for veteran's training, thus clearing the way for these veterans to enter the college in Nashville. Another history-making event during this year was the purchase of additional property for the college. The Sword building on Richland Avenue was bought for \$10,500 cash, and much of the college classroom and business activity was transferred to the new location. The spring of 1946 marked another accomplishment when the college was approved for training Sunday school teachers under the Evangelical Teacher Training Association of Chicago. Since that time, hundreds of students have been granted the E. T. T. A. diploma in addition to the regular awards from the college.

The Bible conference during the spring of 1946 attracted 54 out-of-town guests, in addition to the 39 students enrolled in the college. Speakers were Rev. Chester Pelt, chaplain in the U. S. Army; Rev. J. C. Griffin, of North Carolina, and Rev. Damon C. Dodd, missionary to Cuba.

Enrollment reached an all-time high in 1946-47 when 69 were counted. One of the first auxiliary organizations ever to be organized on a student basis was a Young People's Auxiliary. This group was started in February of 1946 and gave rise to other similar auxiliary organizations in later years. One of the highlights of this year was a farewell service for Rev. and Mrs. Paul Woolsey, who were leaving for missionary service in India. Both Mr. and Mrs. Woolsey had been good friends of the college since its inception and this service of farewell was touching and inspiring. During the two weeks between semesters, a training school was conducted by Dr. Clarence H. Benson, of the E. T. T. A. Many people availed themselves of this opportunity and the inter-semester session was a great success.

This year marked the end of Mr. Ennis' term as acting president, as both he and Mr. Davidson resigned as president and business-manager respectively. In June of 1947, Rev. L. C. Johnson was again employed as president of Free Will Baptist Bible College. He had been pastor of East Tupelo, Mississippi, church and came back to the college from there. Rev. Henry Melvin was elected business manager-treasurer at the same time.



Fifty-eight students enrolled in the college in 1947 and it was during this school year that the first gift of its kind was made when Rev. and Mrs. John H. Wolfe, of Nebraska, sold their home and gave the price of it to the college. Rev. Wolfe had already made a substantial gift of valuable books to the college library. Rev. and Mrs. Charles Thigpen were added to the college faculty during this year. The practical work department chalked up a record of service which had never been equalled up to this time when they dealt with 1,149 people and reported 252 decisions for Christ. The Bible conference that year attracted 107 visitors and it was here that the first mention was made of the need of an auditorium. In February of 1948, Rev. E. C. Morris, of Tifton, Georgia, gave a series of lectures on Free Will Baptist history for the benefit of the student body and a few visitors.

The year 1948-49 will always be remembered as revival year at Free Will Baptist Bible College for it was in the winter of this session that a genuine revival broke out spontaneously. It began in the dormitories and spread from there to the classrooms and the chapel services. This revival vitally affected each of the 80 students and added an unparalleled spiritual emphasis to the college during that year. Rev. Ralph Lightsey had been added to the faculty and was appointed Dean of the College. During the spring Bible conference of this term, the Free Will Baptist Bible College Alumni Association was organized, with Rev. J. Reford Wilson being elected president and Hazel Dawkins, secretary.

In 1949-1950, a third year course was added to the curriculum, and then in 1950, the fourth year was added and the Bachelor of Arts degree was offered for the first time. In 1951 the first class to earn this degree was graduated, and it consisted of Adam Scott, now pastor of Calvary Free Will Baptist church, Durham, North Carolina; T. O. Terry, now pastor of Cove City, North Carolina Free Will Baptist church; Marie Hanna, presently a Free Will Baptist missionary in North India; Wesley Calvery, a Free Will Baptist missionary in Japan, and Walter Reynolds, currently serving as pastor of Hickory Grove church, Ahoskie, North Carolina.

Memorial Auditorium was completed during the school year of 1950-51 and the same year the property at 3612 Richland was purchased for the president's home at a cost of \$15,500. The graduation exercises were held there in 1951 and the National Association convened in the auditorium in July, 1951. The latest addition to the

# CHURCHES



COFER'S CHAPEL CHURCH, Nashville, Tennessee



ST. MARY'S CHURCH, New Bern, North Carolina



LEWIS AVENUE CHURCH, Tulsa, Oklahoma



FIRST CHURCH, Cordova, Alabama

physical plant at Free Will Baptist Bible College is the present administration building, formerly Richland apartments, acquired in 1953 at a cost of \$65,000.

Enrollment in the college continued to increase each year and figures taken from the college enrollment records show the following: 1949-50, 76; 1950-51, 104; 1951-52, 142; 1952-53, 170; 1953-54, 161; 1954-55, 185. For the first semester of the 1955-56 year, the enrollment was 169, with many prospects in line for the second semester. More than 500 different persons had enrolled in the college over the past thirteen years of operation, and if the present trend continues, many times this number will be enrolled in the next thirteen years.

While it is true that an institution such as Free Will Baptist Bible College cannot measure her success or failure in financial terms, there can be no denying the fact that her growth can certainly be reflected thus. Beginning in 1942 with an investment of \$15,000 and nine students, the college closed out the 1954-55 school year with a plant whose net worth was approximately \$180,000 and a student body of 185. Much of the credit for this growth must go to Dr. L. C. Johnson, who has served as the institution's president for ten of its thirteen years of existence and to the Board of Trustees, headed for the greater portion of these years by Rev. J. L. Welch of Nashville, Tennessee, whose early endeavors in the educational field laid the foundation for that which is now our heritage. The present faculty has done a magnificent work and they are to be highly commended. They are listed herewith:

L. C. Johnson—President

J. P. Barrow; Leroy Forlines, dean of men, head of the extension and practical work departments; Robert E. Picirilli; C. F. Bowen; Mrs. J. B. Hall; Fay Gilbert; Marna Graves; Naomi Brant; Ross Dowden, and Emily Dance.

Staff members are: Bayless McDonald, treasurer; Mrs. Anna Barrow, librarian; Ray Turnage, food service manager; J. B. Hall, building maintenance manager; Mary Ruth Wisheart, secretary; Mrs. J. E. Simpson, dean of women; Olena Filkins, secretary to the president; Mrs. Ken Eagleton, bookkeeper; and Mrs. J. L. Welch, receptionist. Mr. J. P. Barrow, of the faculty, and Mrs. Welch, receptionist, have been with the school since September, 1944.

The college has five literary societies on the campus, and student government is regulated by an active Student Council.



## CHAPTER XXV

### FREE WILL BAPTIST AUXILIARIES

In the course of this Free Will Baptist story, we have touched on practically every phase of the church's activity as it affected the overall program of the denomination. There are three of the auxiliaries which have not been duly considered and they are the Sunday school, the Free Will Baptist League, and the Woman's Auxiliary. To make our story complete, let us go into a brief history of these organizations.

The Sunday school movement in the Free Will Baptist church was slow in gaining popularity. In the Palmer movement, there was so little actually known about this organization that no thought was given to including it as part of the church's program. The church leaders knew nothing about how to carry on a church school schedule, and their facilities were not adequate even if they had desired to do so, for in those days the meetings were held in the homes, inasmuch as there were few church houses.

By the middle of the 18th century, some of the churches of other denominations were beginning to organize Sunday schools, so some of the Free Will Baptist folk inquired about setting up some schools in their churches. The matter was brought up in the Association and the outcome was that a directive was issued permitting the organization of Sunday schools in Free Will Baptist churches where it was thought needful and advisable. However, it was a matter to be decided upon entirely by the local church.

As to the exact date of the organization of the first Free Will Baptist Sunday school, I have been unable to find any record, if indeed one was kept. There were schools in some of the churches as early as 1780 and 1785, and perhaps even before that time. By the coming of the 19th century, Sunday schools were getting to be more popular and were much more widely accepted.

In the north, the story was the same. For some years after the Free Will Baptist work started, the churches had no Sunday schools. Sometime during the early 1800's they became a part of the program and were organized widely throughout the General Conference and at last it came to be the accepted idea in the ranks for the churches to have Sunday schools.

By 1836, the conference realized the importance of Sunday school work, and on February 24 of that year the Free Will Baptist Sunday School Union was organized for the purpose of more closely correlating the Sunday schools and the churches. This Union also began to plan for some sort of literature for the Sunday schools, and was instrumental in getting the first quarterlies published in 1851. These were written by editors elected for that purpose and were published by the Morning Star Company. In 1871 another improvement was made in the Sunday school literature when lesson leaflets were made available for distribution. A junior quarterly was printed in 1873 and an intermediate quarterly made its appearance two years later. By 1910, most of the northern Free Will Baptist churches had Sunday schools and when the merger came and many of the Free Will Baptist churches were no more, the Sunday school idea had caught on and when the denomination came back together again, it had a head-start in this direction.

At the present, this is one of the more important phases of our denominational work. The national Sunday School Board employs a full-time promotional secretary, Rev. William Mishler, and the board, at the present time, is conducting a series of Sunday School Institutes in various localities over the denomination as a means of improving Sunday schools in the local churches. The publications of Sunday school literature which are approved by the Sunday School Board and printed by the Free Will Baptist Press at Ayden, North Carolina are:

*The Tiny Tots Lesson leaflets*

*Little Folks quarterly*

*Junior, Intermediate, Senior quarterlies*

*The Advanced quarterly*

*The Bible Teacher's quarterly*

In addition to these, the Board also distributes a complete line of six-point grading and record materials for use in Sunday schools.

As a means of fellowship and inspiration, as well as training, the Sunday School Board sponsors a Sunday school convention every other year which embraces all the schools in the National Association. These gatherings are always attended by a representative group from the various states and are one of the big denominational events. The Free Will Baptist Sunday School Board is a member of the National Sunday School Association and as such has official representatives on the Board of Administration of that organization, thus

giving a profitable connection with the greater Sunday school movement in the United States of America.

Free Will Baptists have ever been mindful of the young people in the churches and for at least one hundred years have afforded them a medium of worship through which they could express themselves and be trained for the responsibilities of church leadership when it was passed into their hands.

During the early years of Free Will Baptist existence there was no youth organization within the church. So far as we are able to determine from the records which are available, the first such group was set up in Maine among the northern churches about 1850 and was known as the Society of Free Baptist Young People. In later years the name was changed to Advocates of Christian Fidelity and the procedure of the meetings became one in which the young people themselves took an active part.

The Advocates of Christian Fidelity organization was active in every phase of denominational life. At one time they were assigned the task of raising funds for sending a missionary to India and supporting him while on the field. They were still underwriting his salary at the time of the merger. Another task which they undertook and completed successfully was that of raising money to build a church in Boston, Massachusetts.

By 1900, the young people's work had become an integral part of the denominational life and their annual report to General Conference in 1904 showed a total membership in all societies of approximately 15,000. National officers were: E. P. Metcalf, president, Providence, Rhode Island; Rev. T. J. Maywhorter, vice-president, Wawaka, Indiana; general secretary, Harry S. Meyers, Hillsdale, Michigan. A board or council of nine members acted for the A.C.F. between tri-ennial meetings.

The A.C.F. organizations became a part of the southern Free Will Baptist movement after the turn of the century and some of the churches had societies organized for their young people. The two about which we have the earliest records were in St. Mary's church, New Bern, North Carolina, and Cofer's Chapel, Nashville, Tennessee. While this was not the extent of the A.C.F.s in the south, we mention these two because of the part which they play in our story, and the role of their leaders, Mrs. Alice Lupton and Rev. J. L. Welch.

Just prior to the meeting of the North Carolina state convention in 1920, the young people's work in Cofer's Chapel church in Nashville,

Tennessee, had been reorganized under the name Free Will Baptist Leagues. This fact was reported by Mr. Welch at the state convention in North Carolina and a suggestion was made that the name "Advocates of Christian Fidelity" be dropped and the name "Free Will Baptist League" be adopted. It was pointed out that the new name had the effect of making the organization seem to be a part of the Free Will Baptist denomination, whereas the other name carried no particular denominational significance. The new name was enthusiastically adopted, and Mr. Welch, Mrs. Lupton, and Rev. L. E. Ballard were elected to head up the new work and edit literature for use in the Leagues.

When the General Conference in the east was reorganized, Mr. Ballard and Mr. Welch were chosen the first young people's leaders and for several years they headed the youth movement. Then at the organization of the National Association in 1935, the following record was made: "The Free Will Baptist League work that has been being sponsored by the General Conference was accepted by the National Association and Rev. Henry Melvin, 1211 East Main Street, Durham, North Carolina, was elected as national secretary of the Free Will Baptist Leagues."<sup>1</sup> In 1938, a League Board was elected by the National Association and the secretary, in his report, stated, "I find our leaguers to be a group of some 25,000 for the most part spiritually-minded and desirous of being used of Christ in and through the church and to put the Kingdom of God first in their lives . . . ." A further note in the report stated, "We have a very satisfactory manual published, which was written by Rev. Clarence Bowen and issued with my authorization . . . ." The report is concluded with, "after twelve years of association with the Free Will Baptist League, I am more convinced than ever that our church stands at the threshold of its largest opportunity. Through the years it has been our aim to reach our youth with the doctrine of our church, the Word of God, the developing of prayer life, the encouragement of stewardship, the broadening of vision for missions. This has been accomplished in a far greater measure than many of us are aware or dream of, and these leaguers await the word of their church to serve . . . ."

The work of the Leagues rapidly came to be one of the most popular phases of the Free Will Baptist program and under the supervision of Mr. Melvin, chairman of the League Board, and Rev. C.

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<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of First Session of National Association*—page 6.



F. Bowen, Nashville, Tennessee, the first Nationwide League Conference was staged. This meeting was designed to embrace all the Leagues from all the states, and it was an overwhelming success. The meeting was held in East Nashville church, Nashville, Tennessee, in June, 1948, with representatives from every state where there are Free Will Baptist churches attending. The second conference was held in June, 1949, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and attendance and interest reached a new high. In 1950, Norfolk, Virginia, was the scene of the meeting and Nashville was again the site in 1951. In 1952 Shawnee, Oklahoma, was host and in 1954 Nashville entertained the session. The 1956 meeting will be held in Greenville, North Carolina.

The Leagues are set up on a graded basis for each age group. The grades are: Story Hour, Junior, Intermediate, Senior, and Adult. Quarterlies are provided for each age group beginning with Juniors. The lesson material is written by Free Will Baptist writers who are approved by the League Board.

The affairs of the Free Will Baptist League Board are carried on from the national headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee. Mr. Ray Turnage, a youth leader, of Nashville is the present secretary of the board and as such is in charge of the board's activities. The primary activities of the Free Will Baptist Leagues for the past three years have been sponsoring special drives for missionary enterprises. In 1954, a fund known as "Lights for Cuba" was completed which provided money for installing electric current in our Cuban school. Presently the Leaguers are working on "Chapels for Cuba", a project designed to raise money for erecting church buildings in Cuba. This has been done in cooperation with the Foreign Mission Board of the denomination.

Thus, Leaguers have always been vitally concerned about their denominational program and through their organization have had a first-hand part in shaping and supporting her various programs. And most of all, from the ranks of the Free Will Baptist Leagues will come our Free Will Baptist churches and leaders tomorrow. At the present there are leagues in 20 states with an enrollment in excess of 125,000.

#### WOMAN'S NATIONAL AUXILIARY CONVENTION

The Woman's National Auxiliary Convention is a national organization of Free Will Baptist women and is designed for fellow-

ship and mutual endeavor in supporting and promoting the greater cause of the church.

The first convention on a national scale was held in Glennville, Georgia, June 16, 17, 1936. Delegates from ten states and districts were present and registered and the following officers were elected:

President—Mrs. Alice E. Lupton, New Bern, N. C.  
1st Vice President—Mrs. J. L. Welch, Nashville, Tennessee  
2nd Vice President—Mrs. E. S. Phinney, Bryan, Texas  
3rd Vice President—Mrs. Lizzie McAdams, Midway, Texas  
4th Vice President—Mrs. M. H. Melette, Turbeville, S. C.  
5th Vice President—Mrs. J. R. Bennett, Bridgeton, N. C.  
Recording Secretary—Miss Lola Johnson, Alma, Georgia  
Corresponding Sec'y—Mrs. T. B. Melette, Blakely, Georgia  
Treasurer—Mrs. Fannie Polston, Nashville, Tennessee  
Field Secretary—Mrs. Fannie Polston

The Auxiliary Convention has grown tremendously over the past 19 years, and the report of the president at the 1955 session of the National Association in Tulsa revealed a total income of nearly \$14,000 as compared with less than \$800 for the first year of operation 1936-37. A total membership of 10,000 was reported. Mrs. La Verne D. Miley, of Memphis, Tennessee was elected president, with Mrs. J. B. Chism, vice-president; Mrs. Ralph Staires, recording secretary.

The Woman's National Auxiliary Convention has had an important part in shaping denominational life and thinking, insasmuch as this organization pioneered in the field of stewardship and missionary study courses. Annually, the convention sponsors a stewardship declamation contest for Free Will Baptist young people.

Thus each of the three major auxiliaries of the Free Will Baptist church have had their own particular functions and have filled their places with much happiness and efficiency. All of these, together with the National Association have made possible a stronger and more unified Free Will Baptist church.

#### FREE WILL BAPTIST PRESS

While it is not an auxiliary of the National Association, it would seem fitting to pay tribute here to the Free Will Baptist Press in Ayden, N. C., for its valuable contributions over the years in the field of literature and publications. With its weekly paper, *The Free Will Baptist*, the Press has, even in the darkest days, continued to lift up a voice for the Free Will Baptist cause.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION IN REVIEW

Taking up the story of the National Association in operation, we will go back to 1940 and the meeting which was held that year in Paintsville, Kentucky. This was the fourth annual session and the Association convened on Tuesday evening, July 15. The statistician's report for the year showed 1,185 churches with a combined membership of 102,000. Rev. James F. Miller, Missouri, was elected moderator and Rev. E. C. Morris, of North Carolina, was chosen clerk.

The Association concerned itself with getting set up on the annual meeting basis and in laying plans for the years immediately ahead. A treatise revision committee gave a report which was adopted by the body. It revised the Article which had to do with washing the saint's feet, adding the following statement: "Washing the saint's feet; this teaches love, humility, and service, and is the privilege and duty of every believer."

"The following addition was made:

"Chapter XVI. Tithing: Both the Old and New Scriptures teach tithing as God's financial plan for the support of all his work . . ."<sup>1</sup> In addition, Article VIII of the Constitution was revised so as to include the Board of Education as a standing board of the National Association while the record of this meeting may not appear so illustrious, it was vastly important in the long-range plans of the National Association.

The 1941 session was held in Drumright, Oklahoma, and was attended by the largest delegation ever registered for such a meeting. This was a most important meeting in that many "firsts" were proposed, some of which were accepted and some rejected. The executive secretary's report showed a balance of \$7,414.98 in the various denominational treasuries, with income on a constant increase.

The executive secretary, Rev. L. R. Ennis, of Goldsboro, North Carolina, had been employed by the General Board of the National Association, pursuant to the vote of that body at the close of the Paintsville, Kentucky session in 1940. Mr. Ennis was guaranteed \$50 per week with the understanding that all remuneration received

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<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of National Association—1940*, p. 12.

by him from revival meetings or pastorates was to be applied on his salary.

Among matters proposed by the General Board to the Association convened in Drumright was that of incorporating the General Board and making it a denominational trusteeship. This brought on a storm of protest from the majority of the delegates and on Thursday afternoon, the matter was tabled indefinitely on recommendation of the General Board.

The functions and duties of the various Boards and agencies were outlined at this meeting and accepted by the body, as was a proposed unified program of support for every part of the National Association program. In order to present it here as it was given at that time, I am quoting from the minutes of the National Association at its 1941 session Drumright, Oklahoma, pp. 20, 21:

**"Resolutions General and Specific"**

Recommended by the General Board

"Whereas the unity of the body of Christ is designed to produce corporate worship and united service, therefore be it resolved:

1. That Christian unity is the equitable support of Missions, Education, and Benevolence besought through the establishment of a Unified Program Fund, and that all subordinate organizations, standing boards, officers, field workers, and ministers of the denomination be and are hereby called upon to promote, patronize and donate to this fund. It shall be allocated to the objects supported by the Association as the body may be pleased to direct in its annual sessions. Designated gifts to Missions, Education, and Superannuation may be sought at the will of those standing boards which promote these enterprises, and it shall be the privilege of churches and individuals to respond as the Spirit may lead.

2. That receipts to the Unified Program Fund for the ensuing year 1941-42 shall be allocated as follows: 10 percent to Superannuation fund, 20 percent to the Home Missions fund, 30 percent to Foreign Missions fund, and 40 percent to the Educational fund. It is provided also that the Penny-A-Day fund, and any other undivided funds, now in the treasury of the National Association, shall be allocated to the respective funds herein named on the percentage basis established for the ensuing year.

3. That the fiscal year of the National Association be and is hereby established as of July the first to June the thirtieth, and that the books of the Association, the General Board, and all standing Boards shall be closed annually on June the thirtieth.

4. That the National Sunday School Convention be and is hereby requested to call upon the Sunday Schools throughout the denomination for a special offering to the Unified Program in the month of September, 1941, and that the National Free Will Baptist League Board be requested to sponsor a special offering to this fund in December, 1941, and that the



National Auxiliary Convention be petitioned to make a special offering to the Unified Program in January, 1942.

5. That the Board of Education of the National Association be and is hereby requested to promote, plan, and direct, as may be found practical, Christian Workers' Institutes throughout the states of the National Association for the ensuing year.

6. That the National Home Mission Board be and is hereby directed to intensify its activities with a view to building up its treasury sufficient to meet the expenses of a General Home Missionary.

7. That the Foreign Mission Board be and is hereby directed to conduct an extensive missionary education program, including institute classes, study courses in local churches, lessons in Sunday school and League literature on missions, newspaper correspondence and reports, and circular letters to national, state, and district officers.

8. That the Board of Superannuation be and is hereby directed to conduct a survey among those engaged in the ministry throughout the National Association with a view to disclosing their average age, years spent in service, income, training, general circumstances, and needs."

This was far and away the most comprehensive and demanding program of work ever to be adopted by Free Will Baptists and it was overwhelmingly adopted by the National Association. The Unified Program, especially, met with almost unanimous acceptance and, although funds received during the initial months were not impressive, there was a unifying characteristic which attended this effort which did much to strengthen denominational fellowship and cooperation.

Each department of the Association accepted its responsibility as charged by the body and the year 1941-42 saw the greatest era of denominational education which had ever been witnessed. The one movement which made this success possible was the Christian Workers' Institutes. This was actually a "portable Bible school" so designed that it could be set up in the local church using the facilities of the church. Sessions were scheduled for two weeks and certificates were issued to students upon completion of the courses. Upon successfully finishing four such sessions, students were awarded diplomas by the National Association's Board of Education in cooperation with the Christian Workers' Institutes. The subjects taught were: Free Will Baptist Doctrines, Evangelism, Missions, Sunday School, League, Woman's Auxiliary, Biblical Introduction, Church Government, and Stewardship. Later, the Evangelical Teacher Training Courses were added, as was homiletics. Credit for inaugurating these Institutes must go to Rev. L. R. Ennis, of Goldsboro, North Carolina, who was at that time serving as executive secretary of the denomination. This work is now carried on by the extension department of Free Will Baptist Bible College.

Denominational progress over the year 1941-42 shattered all previous records and reports at the Columbus, Mississippi meeting in July, 1942 reflected the almost phenomenal accomplishments. Foreign mission receipts jumped sixty per cent, Home mission income was up thirty-five per cent, and Unified Program funds had gone beyond the expectations of everyone. The following paragraphs taken from the report of the executive secretary to the National Association will give an idea of the spirit of optimism which pervaded the denomination that year.<sup>2</sup>

"Immediately following the 1941 session of the Association a new institution was inaugurated for the advancement of our great cause—the Christian Workers' Institute. For many years, Free Will Baptists have realized the need of a medium of fellowship, education, and inspiration that would go beyond the possibilities of our great associational meetings. It is an accepted fact among those who have attended the Christian Workers' Institutes that it is the answer to this need. During the year four sessions have been conducted at strategic points, namely: Monett, Missouri; Erwin, Tennessee; Flat River, Missouri, and Tulsa, Oklahoma. There have been 163 students enrolled from nine states . . . and 91 certificates awarded. . . . Undoubtedly the Christian Workers' Institute is one of the greatest unifying agencies among us. We need it. Let us keep it running.

"Another forward measure which was adopted by the Association last year was the setting up of the Unified Program Fund. This fund was established in response to a demand which had been made by many of our people for a system by which consistent support might be given to all of our work through the making of undesignated gifts on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis. It will be remembered that the Association adopted a resolution in the last annual meeting which provided for the distribution of this fund as follows: 10 percent to Superannuation, 20% to Home Missions, 30% to Foreign Missions, and 40% to Christian Education. During the year our national treasurer has paid to the respective treasurers of these departments of our work \$2,169.05. Approximately 15% of the total given to our National Program this year has come from the Unified Program. These figures announce a signal success for the Unified Program.

"It will be inspiring to those who have labored in love for all of our work during the past year to know how figures speak in terms of progress. The Superannuation Treasurer reports receipts in the amount of \$324.48, the Home Mission treasurer \$478.71, the Foreign Mission treasurer \$4,565.33, the Educational treasurer \$8,749.49, and the Woman's Auxiliary Convention treasurer \$977.42. Add to these items \$119.90 of undivided funds now in the treasury of the National Association and we obtain a grand total of \$15,260.33. This amount reveals a financial increase over the previous associational year of more than 100 percent.

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<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of 1942 Session of the National Association*, pp. 21, 22.

Who would forbid our gratitude for such progress? Money is not everything, but nothing goes very far in the kingdom of God without it."

All of this, plus the beginning of a Bible School and the setting up of a new agency to help care for the ever-increasing literature needs, the Board of Publication and Literature, made this the greatest and most historic National Association session ever to be convened up to this time. Two new Associations were received into the National Association at this meeting: The State Association of Mississippi, and the Wolverine Association of Michigan, making a total of nineteen bodies represented by letter or delegates.

The enthusiasm engendered at the 1942 session of the National Association set a new pace for denominational activity for the ensuing year, and great strides of progress were made in every phase of the work. The two departments which lent much emphasis to the renewed vigor were the Bible College department and the Foreign Missions department. Our people seemed suddenly to become aware of the possibilities within their grasp and of their denominational responsibility to do something about it and they went into action. The Unified Program Fund receipts went to nearly \$4,000 and other receipts increased proportionately. Again, for the second successive year, total denominational receipts increased more than 100 percent, reaching \$32,000 for all major programs.

The Liberty Association of Florida was received into the National Association fellowship at the 1943 session and constitutions and By-Laws were adopted for the Superannuation Board and Home Mission Board. At this session Rev. J. B. Bloss of Tennessee was elected to complete an unexpired term on the Home Mission Board and Rev. James F. Miller, former associational moderator, was given a five-year term on the same board. The question of affiliating with the National Association of Evangelicals, an organization composed of several fundamental denominations and churches, came up for consideration before the General Board and was deferred, pending further investigation into the work of said body.

Prior to this time, the executive secretary of the National Association had been serving on a part-time basis. The association voted in 1943 to make this position a full-time one. Rev. L. R. Ennis had tendered his resignation, and the association elected Rev. Robert B. Crawford as executive secretary on a full-time basis. Mr. Crawford assumed office immediately and set up his headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee.



Mr. Crawford's report to the National Association in 1944 at Flat River, Missouri, shows a continued growth in the ranks of Free Will Baptists, especially as growth can be measured in terms of recognizing responsibility and giving of money. His report in part follows:<sup>3</sup>

"May we now face some facts and figures which will speak expressly of our achievements.

"The Unified Program has shown great gains this year. . . . There has been a total of \$5,117.52 received and \$5,075.95 allocated to the respective boards during the year. The Unified Program offerings have increased 60 percent over the year 1943-44 . . . The Superannuation Board has a working plan that is really working. The year 1943-44 shows a 300 percent increase in giving over any other previous year. . . . The Woman's Auxiliary has shown great gains. They have received \$2,472.57. . . . Notwithstanding that there has been no special drive made in the interest of the College, there has been an increase in gross receipts of 16 percent. Total collections for the College amounting to \$21,756.51 have been received since July 1, 1943 . . . In reference to Foreign Missions . . . how wonderful our awakening has been. The receipts for Foreign Missions for the past year show an increase of 70 percent, or a total of \$14,958.64. . . . The total receipts for the past year for all departments of our National work have been \$50,079.90, or 60 percent more than in 1942-43. We should take courage and press on until Jesus says it is enough, then we shall win the victory through Him."

This year also saw the beginning of a plan for assisting aged ministers and providing a retirement plan for other ministers who could qualify. The Board of Superannuation reported that a plan had been worked out with an insurance firm whereby said firm would handle insurance policies for all insurable Free Will Baptist ministers on an endowment basis. The policies were to be offered through the board and the premiums would be paid jointly by the board and the insured minister. The board in session authorized its administrative officer to offer 50 policies to the ministers of the denomination during the year 1944-45.

This year 1944 saw also the retirement from the post of moderator of Rev. James F. Miller, who had served since 1938 in this important position. Mr. Miller had been one of the leaders in organizing the National Association and had served in a most distinguished manner for six sessions as the moderator. A longtime moderator of the Missouri State Association, Mr. Miller, a Missourian by birth, had made an outstanding record as pastor and administrator in Free Will Baptist ranks. His efficient leadership and patient and loving manner had endeared him to literally thousands of Free Will Baptist people

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<sup>3</sup> *Minutes of 1944 Session of the National Association*, p. 31.



over the land, and it was with extreme reluctance that his retirement was accepted. Rev. J. R. Davidson, who had served as assistant moderator for several years, was elevated to the moderatorship, a position for which he was excellently qualified.

The National Association of Free Will Baptists became a member of the National Association of Evangelicals by vote of the body in session at Middlesex, North Carolina in 1945, thus giving Free Will Baptists a voice along with nearly 10 million other fundamental Christians. This membership has been faithfully maintained since that initial vote. At the same time the executive secretary, Rev. Robert B. Crawford, was elected to represent Free Will Baptists on the Board of Administration of the National Association of Evangelicals. In 1946, at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Rev. L. C. Johnson, of Tupelo, Mississippi, was chosen moderator of the National Association. Two new state bodies were received into the Association that year, West Virginia and Arkansas, making a total of 13 state organizations represented in the National Association fellowship. This figure, while smaller than previous ones enumerating constituent associational bodies, reflects the ruling incorporated in the revised constitution as adopted at Middlesex that representation to the National Association is to be by states. Thus, district associations could no longer represent as such, but must come through the State Association of which they were a member.

The statistical report for the year revealed that there were 2,886 churches in the Free Will Baptist denomination with 221,317 members. More than 3,000 ministers were reported, and a total denominational income for major programs of \$83,405.24 was tabulated.

A definite and new note of progress was sounded at the 1946 meeting when it was proposed some plans by which this fund could be raised.

With the rise in spiritual tone, the denomination, in its 1947 session at the Highland Park church, Detroit, Michigan, launched a new program designed to unify the churches in a simultaneous revival campaign. The proposal came from the executive secretary, Rev. Robert B. Crawford, and the plan was for the month of March to be designated "Revival Month," and the churches in the National Association were urged to plan and carry out revivals during that month. The idea was enthusiastically received and several of the churches pledged their earnest and wholehearted cooperation.

It was recognized by many of the denominational leaders that, due to the continued growth of the National Association and the adaptation of the various programs which were being made to keep pace with such growth, a need had arisen for a restudy of the treatise, along with the Constitution and By-Laws, with a view to revising these works. This committee was to meet as often as necessary during the ensuing year in order to complete its work, and a final report was to be made at the next session of the National Association. The committee was headed by Rev. J. C. Griffin, of North Carolina. Other members were Revs. J. F. Miller, Missouri; J. L. Welch, Tennessee; Raymond Riggs, Michigan; K. V. Shutes, Alabama; F. S. VanHoose, Kentucky; and L. A. Holliday, South Carolina.

An ever-increasing number of new churches were being organized and other churches which had been on a part-time pastoral basis were inaugurating full-time services. This resulted in a serious shortage of pastors who were available for the churches. The Resolutions Committee dealt with this vital matter and presented two resolutions to the Body which were adopted. They were:<sup>4</sup>

1. "Seeing the need of more evangelists, preachers, and Christian workers in our denomination, let us resolve that we will spend more time in earnest prayer unto the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth more laborers into His harvest, and that this Association now in session spend time in prayer and petitions unto the Lord on behalf of this great work."

2. "That this Association urge all conferences to recruit lay workers to help fill vacancies resulting from a preacher shortage."

While these resolutions did not result in an immediate solution to the problem, they did serve to bring the people face to face with the need and, thus facing up squarely to the facts, they were warned of the consequences if the matter was not corrected at once. And coincidentally, the number of young men entering the ministry began to increase noticeably within the next five years, as was proven by the number of ministers reported in 1952 when a 25% increase in the number of ordained and licensed ministers was noted.

The meeting of the National Association in Pocahontas, Arkansas, in 1948 was highlighted by the report of the Revision Committee which had been appointed the previous year. Several major changes were made in the Treatise, among them some re-statements of doctrinal positions and regulations in church government and polity.

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<sup>4</sup> *Minutes of 1947 Session of the National Association*, p. 32.

There were also some changes made in the Constitution and By-Laws of the National Association while these changes will not be noted as such in this chapter, the revised Constitution and By-Laws will be included, which, when compared with the first Constitution and By-Laws in an earlier chapter, will give an accurate picture of the sweeping changes which had wrought over a period of the thirteen years of the Association's history.

The major change made in church government had to do with the tenure of office of deacons. Prior to this change, the regulations pertaining to church officers provided for the deacons to be elected for life, or during the maintenance of sound doctrine and good moral character. The revised regulation allowed the church to stipulate the length of the term for which a deacon was elected. They were to be elected to "serve at the pleasure of the church."

At the close of the Pocahontas meeting, Rev. Floyd Cherry was elected moderator for the next year, succeeding Rev. L. C. Johnson, who had served for three sessions. Rev. Robert B. Crawford, who had served as executive secretary since 1943, expressed a desire not to be re-elected, and Rev. Ralph Lightsey, of Georgia, was chosen as his successor. However, circumstances intervened which prevented Mr. Lightsey from assuming his duties and the Executive Committee of the General Board employed Rev. Henry Melvin, who was business manager of Free Will Baptist Bible College to serve for the year 1948-49.

Mr. Crawford had served as executive secretary for five years, during which time the National Association reached a new peak in every department. He was an efficient and hard-working man, always holding the best interests of the cause of Christ and the denomination which he served as the goal toward which he strove. His was a profitable leadership from every angle and he came to be widely known and highly esteemed in the National Association. His work in connection with the National Association of Evangelicals as the Free Will Baptist representative did much to establish our membership in that organization on a firm footing. Mr. Crawford, a native of Alabama and a life-long Free Will Baptist, was educated at the University of Alabama and Vanderbilt University. He is an ardent Free Will Baptist, a leading pastor in North Carolina, and continues to play an important role in the denominational program and the National Association.

The denomination moved into another new field in 1949 when a



Stewardship Commission was elected. For several years a gradual consciousness was taking hold of our people in regards to their stewardship obligations. Meeting in Columbus, Georgia, that year, the body selected five men and instructed them to survey the denomination and recommend a program for developing the stewardship capabilities among us. Named on the commission were: Revs. J. L. Welch, L. C. Johnson, D. C. Dodd, of Tennessee; and F. B. Cherry and R. B. Crawford of North Carolina. This group met in Nashville the following October and arranged to launch the first denominational-wide stewardship campaign ever to be undertaken. A series of lessons was issued and several hundred were sent out to the several churches to be used as study courses. The results were more than gratifying and even today, the work of the Stewardship Commission is still a positive factor in our overall program.

The office of executive secretary was abolished at the 1949 meeting in favor of a national promotional secretary, with the idea of setting up a department which could concern itself primarily with "selling" the entire denominational program. Rev. Damon C. Dodd, of Missouri, was elected to serve in this capacity. Mr. Dodd came to Nashville in September and began active service as promotional secretary of the National Association under the supervision of the Executive Committee of the General Board.

Rev. E. C. Morris, who had served as clerk of the Association, since its second session in 1938, requested that he be relieved of his position at the close of the 1949 session, and Rev. C. F. Bowen, of Nashville, Tennessee was named to succeed him. Mr. Morris, who was then serving churches in Georgia and was also promotional secretary of the Georgia State Association, had served admirably and efficiently for ten years. He continues to this day as an active member of the National Association and has held several important posts in that organization while continuing to serve as promotional secretary in Georgia. He received his training at Ayden Seminary, in North Carolina, and served in pastorates in that state as well as in Texas before going to Georgia. He makes his home in Tifton, Georgia, from which place he directs the Free Will Baptist program of that state.

The first Free Will Baptist church in California was organized in Porterville in the early 1940's. In 1946, the second church was organized in that state, and this seemed to open the flood-gates, for other new Free Will Baptist churches followed in quick succession



until more than 30 were reported by 1950. One of these newer churches in Richmond, California, was the site of the meeting of the National Association in 1950. This session was marked by a spirit of revival and several conversions were reported in the worship services. The meeting was themed under the slogan, "Every Free Will Baptist a Good Steward" and that note was sounded throughout the gathering. The denomination reported an all-time high in financial receipts and in the number of new churches reported as well as in decisions for Christ. The Home Mission Board under the chairmanship of Rev. J. B. Bloss, of Columbia, Tennessee, made a glowing report and challenged the denomination to give it the support that it deserved. This proved to be the beginning of a new era for this program and in the next three years, almost unbelievable gains were made in this department. The revival campaign was turned over to the Home Mission Board to be conducted under its sponsorship, and the Christian Workers Institute was shifted to the Free Will Baptist Bible College where it came to be known as the extension department of that institution.

The next two years marked a great period of transition for the National Association. She had grown so rapidly and her various departments had enlarged themselves so greatly that a shift in planning and methods became imperative. The promotional secretary introduced to the body in Shawnee, Oklahoma, in 1952 a Cooperative Plan of Support, in which he proposed that an overall denominational budget be set and the entire amount be raised through the combined efforts of all the departments. This plan was presented to the General Board and was adopted by that group for research and study. Present at this meeting was a delegation from the General Baptist Conference of the U. S. A. to discuss the possibilities of a fellowship between the two groups, looking toward a possible merger when the time was right. Rev. E. E. Morris, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma was moderator of this session with Rev. Paul Ketteman, of South Carolina as clerk. Rev. N. Bruce Barrow, of North Carolina had served as moderator for the 1950 session in California and the 1951 session in Nashville, Tennessee.

In the 1953 session of the National Association, at Mt. Vernon, Illinois, several important steps were taken. The promotional secretary, Rev. D. C. Dodd, presented the Cooperative Plan of Support before the General Board, and also a recommendation that the Executive Department, with an executive secretary again be set up. The

General Board, in its report to the body, which was adopted recommended the following:<sup>5</sup>

Item 1. "That an Executive Secretary be elected and that the Executive Committee be charged with the arranging of finances to support the office and setting forth the duties of the Executive Secretary. . . .

Item 3. "That a denominational budget be adopted based on the budgets of the various Boards or Departments of the National Association.

Item 4. "That the denominational budget be raised in a cooperative way, so far as possible, however, each department of work shall have the right to promote its own interests when the needs demand, while the Executive Secretary shall have the responsibility of promoting a Cooperative Program."

It was during this meeting that our first official National Association publication was born. Prior to this, the existing state publications in North Carolina and Missouri had served as the medium, but now, by vote of the Body, *Contact* was authorized and the newly elected executive secretary, Rev. W. S. Mooneyham, of Oklahoma, was named its editor. The details were to be arranged by Mr. Mooneyham and the Executive Committee.

The headquarters campaign had been climaxed in April, 1953, under the leadership of Mr. Dodd, and in May of that year property was purchased at 3801 Richland Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee for the denominational headquarters. The session in Mt. Vernon approved the purchase and authorized the departments to move into the building and operate their programs from that place. The Boards moving in as of September 1, 1953 were: Foreign Missions, Rev. Raymond Riggs, promotional secretary; Home Missions, Rev. D. C. Dodd, promotional secretary; Woman's National Auxiliary Convention, Mrs. H. B. Sloan, executive secretary; Executive Department, Rev. W. S. Mooneyham, executive secretary. The Free Will Baptist League Board followed soon thereafter with Rev. C. F. Bowen, secretary, and the Sunday School department, within a year, with Rev. William Mishler, promotional secretary.

An idea of the tremendous growth in the denomination can be gathered by observing that total income for the major programs for the year 1952-53 reached \$153,000 dollars, setting a record for the best financial year in the denomination's history.

The year 1953 also provided another "first" when the two mission boards employed full-time promotional secretaries. Rev. Raymond Riggs, of Detroit, Michigan was chosen as foreign missions

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<sup>5</sup> *Minutes of 1953 Session of the National Association*, pp. 25, 26.

promotional secretary. Mr. Riggs had served as part-time promotional secretary for the board while being pastor of Highland Park church in Detroit. The Home Mission Board employed Rev. D. C. Dodd. Mr. Dodd had asked to be relieved of the promotional secretary position of the National Association after having served four years in that office. These men assumed their duties on September 1, 1953.

Spartanburg, South Carolina, was host to the National Association in 1954 and the largest body of delegates and ministers ever to attend a session was registered. The cooperative program was adopted at this meeting and plans were set to begin officially under the plan in July, 1955. The denomination also voted to operate on the calendar year, beginning in January of 1956. Representation to the National Association from state conventions was enlarged and the body voted to authorize the Executive Committee to set up a denominational supply business, with the Executive Secretary to work out the detailed plans for this venture.

This session of the Association was marked by the preaching of the Word. The theme was "Revival Now" and the messages were all drawn from this theme. Rev. C. F. Bowen brought the keynote message on "The Urgency of the Burning Heart". Other preachers appearing on the program were: Rev. Charles Thigpen, Detroit; and Dr. Bob Jones, Jr., Greenville, South Carolina; The Wednesday evening service was given to the mission boards and was climaxed by a service in which three home mission teams were publicly commissioned for work in new fields. They were: Rev. and Mrs. Robert Wilfong, Rev. and Mrs. Sylvester Crawford, and Rev. and Mrs. G. C. Lee, Jr.

Total receipts for greater causes reported thru the Boards and agencies reached a record of \$214,000, for an increase of nearly 50% over the previous year.

To carry the National Association story farther would be largely presumptuous, inasmuch as the National Association session in Tulsa of 1955 has just closed. This will be the place of beginnings for the newer story when someone at a later date takes up the task of recording further and more recent events. Suffice it to say that the Tulsa meeting broke all records in attendance and interest, with approximately 2,000 persons present. Total receipts were reported at \$283,000 and a budget was set for 1955-56 of \$324,300. Rev. Charles Thigpen, of Detroit, Michigan was elected moderator and



Rev. T. G. Hamilton, of Georgia was chosen clerk. Rev. W. S. Mooneyham was retained as executive secretary. Present figures reveal 4,500 Free Will Baptist churches in 41 states with a combined membership of 450,000.

### *The National Association in Operation*

In order to give a true picture of the organizational pattern of the National Association, it will be necessary to insert at this point the constitution which was approved by the body in session in Nashville. It will be noted that the two groups, the Eastern and Western Conferences were to carry on their work as separate entities, then were to come together once every three years as a National Association (see Article III, Section I). This did not prove practical and was soon set aside in favor of an annual meeting of the national body.

## CONSTITUTION

**Preamble:** From long experience, we, the members of the Free Will Baptist denomination, being regularly baptized upon a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and realizing the necessity of a bond of union and fellowship among us as a church; and to preserve and maintain correspondence and coordination with us, do therefore ordain this constitution for our better denominational government.

## ARTICLE I

**Name**—This organization shall be known as the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

## ARTICLE II

**Purpose**—The object of this organization shall be to unify the work of the various bodies composing this National Association, and to devise and execute measures for the extension of the Kingdom of God in connection with the various bodies in the Association, or that may hereafter be represented therein.

## ARTICLE III

**Section I—Composition**—This National Association shall have two (2) divisions, an Eastern member (formerly known as the General Conference of Free Will Baptists), and a Western member (formerly known as the Cooperative General Association of Free



Will Baptists); but henceforth the Eastern member shall be known as the Eastern Association of Free Will Baptists, and the Western member shall be known as the Western Association of Free Will Baptists.

Section 2—These two members which compose the National Association shall each be divided as follows: State Association, which shall be composed of Annual Associations; and the Annual Association shall be composed of Quarterly Meetings and local churches.

#### ARTICLE IV

Section I—Representation—Each of the two (2) members (Eastern and Western Associations) which compose the National Association shall be entitled to ten (10) delegates elected from the laity together with all ordained Free Will Baptist ministers who hold church membership and are in good standing.

Section 2—This National Association shall have no power to fill vacancies in the delegation from either body.

#### ARTICLE V

Section I—Discipline—This National Association shall have the right to settle any question of discipline, doctrine, or usage that may properly come before it from either of the bodies composing said organization of the National Association of the Free Will Baptist church, or act upon any appeal that may be made by any body belonging to this National Association. Said appeal shall have been written and properly signed by the constituent body or bodies, and its decision shall be final. Such appeals are to come before the National Association, after having been appealed from the lower body to the next higher body.

Section 2—All appeals coming before the National Association may be settled in either of the following ways:

- (1) By the National Association when sitting in a committee as a whole.
- (2) By a special committee whose report shall be voted on without discussion.

#### ARTICLE VI

Section I—Officers—The officers of the National Association shall consist of a Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Recording Clerk, Assistant Recording Clerk, a Treasurer, and an Executive Board,

each of which shall be nominated from the floor and elected by a standing vote of the body at each regular session.

Section 2—National Executive Secretaries of departmental work, namely, Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Young People's work, Women's work, and Sunday Schools, shall be nominated from the floor and elected by a standing vote of the body at each regular session.

Section 3—Committees as necessary shall be appointed by the chair unless otherwise provided for, and shall hold office until their work is completed, or until their successors are elected.

## ARTICLE VII

Section 1—Executive Board—An Executive Board of five (5) members shall be nominated from the floor and elected by a standing vote of the body at each regular session of the National Association. They shall hold office until the next regular session of the Association or until their successors are elected. They shall be elected from either the standing or elected delegates of the Body.

Section 2—The Executive Board shall have power to act in behalf of, and for, the National Association from one regular session of the Association to another, and shall have power to elect such officers as may be necessary for its own government, and to carry out the plans and undertakings of the National Association.

Section 3—This Executive Board shall have power to fill vacancies that may occur in its own body, and shall also have power to fill any vacancies that may occur in any department of the work. It shall be the duty of this Board to make written reports of all its work to the next regular session of the National Association.

## ARTICLE VIII

Meetings—This National Association shall hold its regular meetings every three (3) years. Adjourned sessions may be called when conditions demand. The time of the meeting of this National Association shall be on Tuesday night following the second Sunday in November tri-annually, and shall continue its session until its work is completed.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This is the Free Will Baptist story as it has unfolded in dramatic sequence down through more than 225 years of time. While the telling of it has required far less time than has the making of it, nevertheless, the story thus written and the history thus made should exert a definite effect on those who have read these pages and relived these experiences.

Of course, not all has been told, nor could be told, for if that were possible perhaps the world itself could not contain all the volumes which would be required for such a record. There are the "between the lines" assumptions and the "behind the scenes" goings-on which defy the writer's pen or the historian's research. So far as any claim to complete coverage of the story, the writer freely admits there are none. However, in the light of the story, there are several observations which may well be classed as pertinent and relevant, and these are set forth here as we finish the telling of the *Free Will Baptist Story*.

Free Will Baptist history is resplendent with the deeds of invincible heroes and heroines of the faith who were willing to stand on that which to them was truth and right. When we remember that in the early days of our denomination's history it was extremely unpopular and often dangerous to think for one's self in matters pertaining to the Bible, the church, and salvation, and then recall that our founding fathers dared face all odds to begin a new denomination, we begin to realize how much we owe to them. The Paul Palmers, John Colbys, Benjamin Randalls and such as they, were men of God with God's will as their goal, despite ostracism or hardship. Perhaps we stand in need of such courage in this modern Free Will Baptist era. This is not to say that we are a generation of weaklings or cowards, but that we need that ring of genuineness of conviction which characterized them. They suffered the disadvantage of being in disfavor and disrepute by fostering their beliefs. We enjoy complete freedom and favor in persuing this way. With such an advantage we could go far if we would incorporate this advantage with a persistent and militant denominational spirit and set as our goal the evangelism of all the world with the Gospel of salvation.

The story of our denomination is spotted here and there with failures due to extremes in policy. The very beginning of our denomination was marked by a weakness which got us off to a slow start. That was an untrained ministry. Perhaps this was a reaction to the over-emphasis which had been placed on ministerial training by the churches in power before Palmer became a preacher of free will, free grace, and free salvation. At any rate, the growth was seriously hampered by the fact that many of the ministers of that early Free Will Baptist movement were financially poverty-stricken and uneducated. They had to work for their livelihood with their hands so that they had little or no time for study. They asked very little of their people and consequently received almost nothing. Their parishoners knew no doctrines of their church and fell easy prey to proselyters and free-lancers. Only the Biblical and logical facts which made up the Free Will Baptist teaching saved the day for us.

At last, the movement in the north set the example for ministerial training and for several generations all went well. Then the pendulum began to swing too far in the other direction and emphasis was placed on higher education. Free Will Baptist ministers began to become dissatisfied with their lot, feeling that they were too big for so small a denomination. They eyed the larger groups and coveted larger fields for their ever-mounting ambitions. To attain to this better position, they watered down their preaching and compromised their doctrinal positions until some of them actually were preaching and advocating liberalism. The climax came when they sold their denomination out to others who had lured them with churches which fitted their vaunted opinions of themselves.

We would do well not to forget this lesson in our day. We must have a trained ministry in order to meet the demands which are placed on our church today. This must be a ministry trained in the art of preaching and administering the Gospel and its program. But let us never lose sight of the fact that those who minister must be saved men who are dedicated to God and their denomination and then trained to carry on an uncompromising ministry of the Word. If higher education still carried with it the subtle tendency to throttle the Spirit of God on one's life and give vent to selfish ambitions, then it should never again become a part of our program.

Down through the years, Free Will Baptists have not been able to enlist as they have won. This may sound a bit selfish, but it is not intended as such. Our record proves that we have been intensely



evangelistic and through our preaching efforts, many have been won to the Lord. Yet, after two and one-quarter centuries, we have only one-half million members in our entire denomination. But you may say, "We lost a great number of our communicants to the Northern Baptists in the merger." In answer, let me point out that only 60,000 Free Will Baptists went out in the merger and those in the north alone, with the exception of 500 or 1,000 in the west and southwest. Suppose that we begin with the figure of 150,000 members as reported among all Free Will Baptists in 1827, at the time that the General Conference was organized in New Hampshire. If we had averaged winning 10,000 people per year since that time and adding them to the church as we went along, taking into account our increased strength as we grew, we should be able to report at least two million members today. The facts of our story reveal that we have been negligent about enlisting in our churches those whom we have won in evangelism, thus losing an opportunity to train and use thousands of potential soul-winners and Christian workers.

But we can correct this neglect in our day in the light of our failure in other days. We have a fundamental, active, Bible-preaching church which offers a wide range of service opportunities for all who desire an active part in the Kingdom work of our Lord. Why not enlist them as we win them? This is not to say that we should major on church membership, but neither should we minimize it as we have in the past. "Win them and enlist them" could well become our slogan for this next phase of our Free Will Baptist story.

In reading the *Free Will Baptist Story*, one is struck with the continuing life of a denomination that has undergone so much persecution and has been able to survive and one finds himself constantly asking "Why?" The only logical answer is that God has preserved us for His own glory. For a long time now, we have been saying this over and over to ourselves and as preachers we have told it to our people. If it is true that God has spared us and kept us for the last days, then surely He is now ready to use us. Isn't it high time that we really let Him have us to use, now that we are in the last days? There may not be many more chapters of Free Will Baptist history to write. Let us do as much as possible now, so that when the last page is written and the book is closed forever, we can have the joy of knowing that the Great Master can say of His Free Will Baptist stewards, "Well done, thou good and faithful servants . . . "

Finally, let me point out that our Free Will Baptist story reveals nothing by way of falseness of hypocrisy in the Gospel that we have preached, denominationally. To be sure, there have been "wolves in sheep's clothing" that have crept in now and then, but by and large, our record of preaching has been unspotted. Christ has been exalted and souls have been pointed to Him as the Savior whose blood cleanses from sin. We have always, for these 225 years claimed Him to be the Virgin-born Son of God, who came to earth, lived a sinless life, died on Calvary's cross, and buried in Joseph's tomb. We have preached His glorious resurrection, His ascension back to God the Father, and His present and continuing mediatorship. We have proclaimed that great commission and accepted and acted on our responsibility to preach the Gospel "both in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth." Such a record has been blessed of God and Christ and the Holy Spirit.

And may God grant that we shall always be able to claim such a record to the honor of His Name and for the salvation of the lost everywhere.

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